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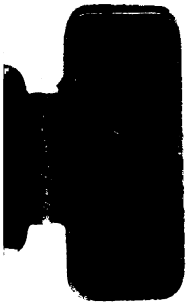
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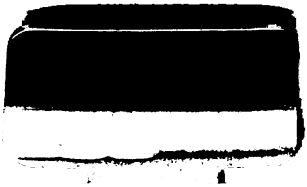
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EZRA

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The Book of Ezra.

Introduction.

In the Hebrew Bible the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are placed at the close of the third division of the Jewish canon, which is called "Ketubim."* In the Talmud, the Massorah, the Septuagint, and in the writings of Josephus, Ezra and Nehemiah are treated as one book. It is claimed that originally Chronicles with Ezra and Nehemiah formed one book. The last two verses with which Second Chronicles closes are repeated in the opening chapter of Ezra.

Ezra, the Author of the Book.

No valid proof can be given that the Jewish and early Christian view, that Ezra is the author of the book which bears his name, is incorrect. He was a pious, deeply spiritual man. His genealogy is found in chapter vii:1–6. We learn that he was a lineal descendant of Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron; and therefore Ezra was a priest. (See chapter vii:11; x:10, 16). He was also a scribe—"a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given" (vii:6); "a scribe of the words of the commandments and of the statutes of Israel" (vii:11). We find him first mentioned in the seventh chapter. The record is given that he went up to Babylon. . . ["and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord God upon him." He received permission from King Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) in the seventh year of his reign (458 B. C.) to lead a number of the people back to Jerusalem. His beautiful, godly character may be seen in the three last chapters of the book, in which he is the principal actor. He was a great man of prayer and worship, with a childlike trust in the Lord, with great zeal for God and an intense interest in His people and their welfare. Much is said of Ezra in talmudical literature, where his greatness and worthiness is celebrated. According to these traditions he was in meekness and godliness like Moses. It is said that he first introduced the Hebrew alphabet in square characters, and that he made the massorah and punctuation of the Scriptures. He is also considered to be the author of the Jewish canon, and to have rewritten the whole of the Old Testament from memory. Most likely he wrote Chronicles besides the record con-

*The order of the books in the Hebrew Bible is as follows: I Tora (the Law) Genesis—2 Kings, except Ruth; II Nevijin (the Prophets) Isaiah—Malachi, except Lamentations and Daniel; III Ketubim (the Writings) Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

tained in this book. It is more than likely that he collected the Psalms in a book and arranged them under the guidance of the Spirit of God in the order in which we possess them now. His great reformation work we shall point out in the annotations.

The Story of the Book.

The book of Ezra records chronologically the return of the remnant to Jerusalem and the events which took place after their return. The rebuilding of the Temple and its dedication are fully described, while Nehemiah records the rebuilding of the wall and the city. The edict of Cyrus permitting the Jews to return and urging the rebuilding of the Temple is followed by the list of names of those who returned under Zerubbabel, a son of David, to Jerusalem. The given number is 42,360. After their re-establishment they proceeded with the building and dedication of the altar, after which the foundation of the Temple was laid. Then the mongrel race, the Samaritans, came offering their fellowship in the building of the Temple; their co-operation was positively rejected. Then the adversaries troubled them, hired counsellors against them, and for a number of years the work stopped. A letter addressed to the King of Persia is inserted in chapter iv and is written in Aramaic (Chaldean).* Then appeared in the midst of the discouraged remnant, when the work had ceased, the two great post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. As a result of the fiery exhortations of Haggai and the glorious visions of Zechariah, a revival took place and under Zerubbabel with Joshua the highpriest, the prophets helping, the building of the house began. Next the governor Tatnai appeared, attempting to stop their work; but he did not succeed. He appealed to the King in a letter which is also given in full in Aramaic; he was confident that he would succeed in ending the work of the remnant. Ezra had access to these documents and reports them in the Chaldean language in which they were written. But when Darius the King instituted a search there was found in Achmetha, in the palace of Media, a roll with the record of Cyrus, which Tatnai the governor had insinuated was a falsehood, used by the remnant to continue the work. Then Darius made a decree by which Tatnai and his companions were commanded not to interfere any more with the work of the house of God, but that the Jews should build the house. The decree also appointed a generous contribution day by day from the King's goods for the Jews. The hostile governor was forced to carry out the decree of the King. After that the temple was completed and dedicated. They kept the feast of Passover and unleavened bread. This concludes the first section of the book.

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*The Aramaic portions of Ezra are chapters iv:8–vi:18 and vii:12–26.

Many years after these events had taken place, Ezra comes upon the scene. Ezra's work is described, and how, authorized by the decree of Artaxerxes, he headed an expedition of exiles, who returned to Jerusalem. Artaxerxes' letter is given in full in the language used by the Chaldeans (Aramaic). Ezra's outburst of praise follows the decree of the King. A list of all who joined Ezra in the return is found in the beginning of the eighth chapter. They gathered at the river Ahava, encamping there for three days. Ezra discovered that none of the sons of Levi were in the company. A number of these were soon added to the returning exiles. Before the journey was started there was a fast and humiliation before God; they looked to Him for a straight way and for protection. They departed from Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month and reached Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, the Lord graciously protecting them from robbers. After that follows the great reformation work in which Ezra dealt with the deplorable moral conditions into which the people had fallen.

The Spiritual and Dispensational Application.

This interesting historical account of a return of a remnant from Babylon contains a message for us. Divine principles are revealed in this book, which find their application to God's people at all times. These spiritual and dispensational lessons will be pointed out in the annotations.

The Divisions of Ezra.

This book is divided into two sections. After the edict of Cyrus there is a return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, the rebuilding of the Temple and its dedication. Then after sixty years the return under Ezra took place.

I. **THE RETURN UNDER ZERUBBABEL AND THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.** Chapter i-vi.

II. **THE RETURN UNDER EZRA AND HIS REFORMATION.** Chapter vii-x.

Analysis and Annotations.

I. THE RETURN UNDER ZERUBBABEL AND THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

Chapter i-vi.

CHAPTER I.

1. The Proclamation of Cyrus. 1–4.
2. The Response of the Chiefs of Judah and Benjamin. 5–6.
3. The Vessels of the House of the Lord restored. 7–11.

Verses 1-4. Cyrus (meaning "the Sun") the King of Persia was, according to ancient historians, the son of Cambyses, Prince of Persia, and Mandam, daughter of Astyages, King of the Median Empire.* The theory that he was the offspring of Ahasuerus and Esther, and was trained by Mordecai and Nehemiah, lacks all historical foundation. The heart of Cyrus in the beginning of his reign was stirred by the Lord, because the time had come that the Word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah might be fulfilled. And this was the Word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah: "For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." (Jere. xxix:10). The seventy years were ended and God was about to act in behalf of His people Israel. Daniel was praying in Babylon after also having read the words of Jeremiah (Dan. ix:1-2). Cyrus was the chosen instrument of the Lord to bring about the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of the Temple. Almost two hundred years before his birth the Lord had revealed his name and his work to the prophet Isaiah. Twice Isaiah mentions the name of this Persian

*Prof. Sayce maintains that Cyrus was an Elamite, but there is not sufficient proof for this. Cyrus was the conqueror of Babylon; he and his army entered Babylon without opposition 538 B. C.

King: "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasures, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut" (Isa. xliv:28, xlv:1). "I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; he shall build my city and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. xlv:13). This was written by this prophet of God over a century before the Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Previously in Isaiah Jehovah had spoken his challenge to the idol-gods to show their power: "Let them bring forth, and show us what shall happen, let them show the former things, what they be . . . or declare us things for to come; show the things that are to come afterward" (Isa. xli:23-23). In naming Cyrus the king, and the great work he would do for the exiles and for Jerusalem, the Lord demonstrates His power to declare things to come and to make the future known. And who would doubt that an omniscient God, who knows all things, the end from the beginning, could do this? Only infidels and destructive critics. The latter have invented a deutero-Isaiah who, it is claimed, wrote the above prophecies concerning Cyrus after he had come into existence and done the work.

It will be seen that the Spirit of God through Isaiah spoke of Cyrus as the Shepherd, the Anointed, the man of my counsel (chapter xlvi:11); whom the Lord loveth (chapter xlviii:14); whose right the Lord upholdeth (chapter xlv:1); who will perform the Lord's pleasure (xlv:28); and yet he is also called "a ravenous bird from the East" (chapter xlvi:11). Cyrus is, as the chosen instrument, a type of the Messiah, Christ. A comparison of Cyrus with Christ, the work Cyrus did for Israel and the work Christ will do in His second coming, is interesting.

The proclamation which Cyrus issued and sent in writing

throughout his kingdom speaks of God as "the Lord God of heaven," and in his edict Cyrus declares, "He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah." How did Cyrus receive this knowledge? Beyond question he knew Daniel, and may have heard from his lips the history of Nebuchadnezzar as well as the great prophecies. This prophet may also have acquainted Cyrus with the prophecies of Isaiah. According to Josephus, the great Jewish historian, Cyrus read the Book of Isaiah himself. When he came to the place in which Isaiah mentioned him by name, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was written in these prophecies. From the record here we learn that it was the Lord who stirred him up to issue the proclamation. In it permission was granted to those Jewish exiles throughout his kingdom to return to Jerusalem to build the house of the Lord; and those who remained were to help with silver and gold, with goods and beasts, besides free-will offering for the house of God. Thus God's Word spoken over two hundred years before was fulfilled in this proclamation of Cyrus: "He shall let my captives go;" "Saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid;" these were the two great prophetic statements of the work he was to do. And so it came literally to pass. All predictions of a future restoration of Israel to their land, not through a Gentile King, but through the coming of Heaven's King, the Shepherd of His sheep, will soon find all their literal fulfillment likewise.

Verses 5-6. There was at once a response from the heads of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites. What joy must have filled their hearts when they read the proclamation of Cyrus! What they had longed and prayed for had come at last. God was acting in their behalf and His promises were about to come to pass. It was the Lord who stirred them to action and to turn their faces towards Jerusalem. But not all were ready to go back:

only a small remnant was willing. The great majority preferred to remain in Babylon. There was nothing to attract them to Jerusalem—the city of ruins, with the once magnificent Temple in ruins. Those who returned, loved Jerusalem, the place the Lord had chosen, where alone the appointed offerings and sacrifices could be brought. They belonged to those who sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion and said, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Ps. cxxxvii). And the Jews who remained helped them generously in every way.

Verses 7-11. Then Cyrus restored the vessels of the House of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from Jerusalem and put into the house of his gods (Daniel i:2). His grandson, Belshazzar, defiled them at his licentious feast (Dan. v:2). In that night Belshazzar was slain and Babylon fell. No doubt Cyrus had these vessels collected and carefully guarded. Mithredath the treasurer handed them to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. This prince was Zerubbabel; Sheshbazzar was the name the Babylonians had given him. He was born in Babylon; his name means "stranger in Babylon." He became the princely leader of the returning exiles. Besides being mentioned in Ezra we find his name also in the Book of Zechariah. In all there were 5,400 vessels of gold and silver which were handed over to Zerubbabel to take back to Jerusalem. How it all shows that God had not forgotten His people, and when His appointed time came He manifested His power in their behalf. Nor has He forgotten His promise to bring a remnant back from the great dispersion among all the nations of the world. When that return comes, a greater than Zerubbabel the prince of Judah will be the leader. The Lord Jesus, the Son of David, will be their Deliverer.

CHAPTER II.

1. The Leaders. 1–2.
2. The Names of the Returning Exiles. 3–35.
3. The Priests. 36–39.
4. The Levites and Singers. 40.
5. The Porters and Nethinim. 42–54.
6. Solomon's Servants. 55–58.
7. Those of Doubtful Descent. 59–63.
8. The Number of the Whole Company. 64–67.
9. The Offering of the House of God. 68–70.

Verses 1-2. This chapter contains the names of the returning remnant. It is a specimen page of the records which God keeps, and from which we may learn that He remembers His people, whom He knows by name and whose works are not forgotten by Him. In the Book of Nehemiah this list is repeated (chapter vii) with an additional record of those who helped in building the wall. He has a book of remembrance (Mal. iii:16); and the Apostle reminded the Hebrew believers of this fact when he wrote: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister" (Heb. vi:10). There were twelve leaders. Only eleven are given by Ezra; in Nehemiah's record we find an additional name (Nahamani), making twelve in all. Zerubbabel was the leader of the returning captives. His name means "seed of Babylon." He is called the son of Shealtiel, the son or grandson of Jeconiah, and was therefore a descendant of David. His name appears in the two genealogies of Matthew (i:12) and Luke (iii:27). In 1 Chronicles iii:19 he is called the son of Pedaiah, who was Shealtiel's brother. This double ascription of parentage may probably be accounted for by Pedaiah having contracted a levirate marriage with Shealtiel's widow. The second leader was Jeshua, also called Joshua. He was a son of Jehozadak and grandson of the high priest Seraiah. Zerubbabel, the princely leader, son of David, and Joshua the highpriest are types of Christ. (See Zech. iv and vi.) Nehemiah is not the Nehemiah who led the other expedition years later;

nor is Mordecai the uncle of Queen Esther, who was an old man and evidently remained in Shushan (Esther x-3). The names Nehemiah and Mordecai were quite common among the Jews. The names of some of the others appear in a slightly changed form in Nehemiah; it was a Jewish custom to call a person by different names.

Verses 3-35. The descendants of the different persons are now given. In all we find 24,144 descendants. Their individual names are not recorded but the Lord knows them all, and cared for each member and sustained them in the journey homeward. Even so He knows all His sheep and keeps every member of His Body, leading them home to glory. If some of the numbers do not agree with Nehemiah's record, there is no doubt a good reason for it. For instance, the descendants of Arah are here 775 and in Nehemiah we find only 652 recorded. Probably 775 had enrolled their names but only 652 went. All the names recorded may be traced in other portions of the Scriptures.

Verses 36-39. The different Temple officials are recorded next. These are priests, Levites, singers, porters and Nethinim. The priests are first mentioned. In 1 Chronicles xxiv there are mentioned twenty-four courses. Jedaiah, Immer and Harim are found in the record of the Chronicles. In all there were 4,289 priests who went back. And these constituted four courses only.

Verses 40-41. Only seventy-four Levites returned. This was a very small number.* There were more singers than Levites. The children of Asaph, that sweet and blessed singer in Israel, were one hundred and twenty-eight. No doubt they encouraged the returning exiles in song, by the spirit of praise and worship. The Babylon experience, so beautifully expressed in Psalm cxxxvii, was passed. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried

*Hodaviah should be read Judah: chapter iii:9.

us away required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" All was changed now. God was working. Deliverance had come and singing no doubt was heard again among the returning hosts. But why were so few Levites ready to go back? According to the divine instruction in the Law they were to have no inheritance save in the Lord. It was a test of faith to return under these circumstances, and for this reason many Levites must have tarried in Babylon, where things were abundant. Those who returned were tested (Neh. xiii:10).

Verses 42-54. The names of the porters and Nethinim. There were in the company one hundred and thirty-nine porters. The Nethinim were Temple servants. The word means "given" or "devoted," i. e., to God. We find this name in only one other passage (1 Chron. ix:2). According to Ezra viii:20 this order originated with King David. Jewish tradition identifies them with the Gibeonites, whom Joshua appointed as helpers to the Levites (Josh. ix:3-27). Whatever their origin, they were devoted servants of God assigned to certain duties in the Temple.

Verses 55-58. Then comes the record of the children of Solomon's servants. These with the Nethinim were three hundred and ninety-two. Nothing certain is known of these additional servants, whose duty seems to have been simliar to that of the Nethinim. Some regard them as the descendants of the strangers whom Solomon had enlisted in the building of the Temple (1 Kings v:13).

Verses 59-63. These verses tell us of the great caution exercised by the people not to tolerate one in their midst whose origin was in any way doubtful. They were determined that Israel should be an unmingled Israel. Therefore they were most careful in examining the genealogies to exclude all who could not be clearly established as true Israelites, for none but such should engage in the work. The true family of God was now marked out and all who could

not clearly prove their connection were set aside. There were six hundred and fifty-two who had joined the company from the Babylonish places Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan and Immer. They were the children of Delaiah, of Tobiah and Nekoda. These could not show their descent. They were allowed to return with the rest, but their names are not found in Ezra x:25-43 or in Nehemiah x:15-28. And also children of priests sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found; they were therefore counted as polluted and put from the priesthood. Tirshatha is the governor (a Persian title meaning "your severity"); his name was Sheshbazzar, the official title of Zerubbabel, the prince (chapter i:8).* Zerubbabel, the governor, ruled that those uncertified priests should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. And how many are there today in the professing church who are in the same uncertainty. While making an outward profession, they have no assurance, they have no clear title and do not know that they belong to the holy priesthood into which grace brings all who have been born again. The church has become a great house (2 Tim. ii:20-21) in which we find the true children of God and those who are such only in profession. If there is to be a return from the Babylon which Christendom is today, the same principle of separation must be maintained. Only those who are born again, who can "show their father's house," constitute the members of the Body of Christ.

Verses 64-67. The number of the whole congregation was 42,360. There were also 7,337 servants and maids, among them two hundred singers; the latter must be distinguished from those mentioned in verses 41 and 70. Singing was evidently a very prominent occupation on the journey towards the homeland! Their groans were ended. The captivity was behind and freedom before. How beautiful

*Nehemiah also had that title (Neh. viii:9).

the chanting of their great psalms must have been as they journeyed on. But greater still will be the time when the wandering remnant, so long scattered among the nations, turns homeward; when through the coming of their King their groans will end forever, and when they sing the Hallelujah chorus in the Kingdom of righteousness and peace.

There were likewise 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels and 6,720 asses.

Verses 68-70. These last verses tell us of what happened when they came to Jerusalem. They must have sought at once the ruins of the former Temple, for that is the spot they loved. Significant it is that though it was razed to the ground, it still existed in the mind of God, and also in the thoughts of the people. It does not say "when they came to the ruins," but "when they came to the house of the Lord." And then the hearts of the fathers were touched, and they gave after their ability unto the treasurer of the work 61,000 drams* and 5,000 pounds of silver† and one hundred priests' garments. They were faithful in their giving, not according to the Law, the tenth part, but after their ability. And in the New Testament the rule for the Church as to giving is stated in 1 Cor. xvi:2, "Upon the first day of the week, let each one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him."

CHAPTER III.

1. The Altar Set Up. 1–3.
2. The Feast of Tabernacles Celebrated. 4.
3. The Sacrifices Brought. 5–7.
4. The Foundation of the Temple Laid. 8–13.

Verses 1-3. How long the journey lasted is not stated. The previous chapter in its close states that all dwelt in their cities—"and all Israel in their cities." The significant seventh month (Tishri) with its holy convocation (Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles)

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*The Persian davic, value about $5.28.

†A pound corresponds to 100 shekels.

having come, the remnant gathered "as one man to Jerusalem." It was the time for such a general gathering, for the Feast of Trumpets is typical of the restoration of Israel, a restoration which was not fulfilled in the return of this remnant; only foreshadowing it. This gathering "as one man to Jerusalem" reminds us of that other gathering in Jerusalem centuries later "when they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts ii:1) and the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and all were baptized into one body, the Church. There is only one body, and all true believers are put into that body by the same Spirit. This oneness was manifested in the beginning of the church on earth (Acts ii: 41-47; iv:23, 32). While its outward expression is lost, yet still the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace can be kept.* Whenever the Spirit of God is permitted to manifest His power unhindered among God's people, the result is always in bringing them together. The Spirit of God never divides, but unites.

Then Jeshua the highpriest with his brethren priests, also Zerubbabel and his brethren, built the altar of the God of Israel, to be enabled to bring the burnt offerings as commanded in the law. Obedience to the Word of God was their first concern. Fear was also upon them because of the people of those countries, therefore they felt the need of protection. They knew Jehovah is the Shield and the Refuge of His trusting people. First they were obedient to His Word by setting up the altar for worship and approach to God in the appointed way, and then they trusted Him that He would keep them in the midst of their enemies. The altar and the burnt offerings morning and evening are typical of Christ, who is the altar and the burnt offering. Whenever the Spirit of God sends a true recovery and revival He will make the Lord Jesus Christ and His blessed finished work the first thing. He leads His people together,

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*Sectarianism is a denial of that unity.

and then in true worship around the Person of the Lord. This worship centers for the true church in the Lord's Supper, that precious feast of remembrance.

Verse 4. Next they kept the Feast of Tabernacles—as it is written (Lev. xxiii:33-36). They manifested a holy zeal in rendering a complete obedience to the law of their fathers. The Feast of Tabernacles typifies the consummation when the Kingdom has come and the full harvest. Another remnant of Israel will return in the future, under different circumstances, and then when Messiah, the King, is in the midst of His people, the feast will find its fulfillment. We learn from this how exact the returned exiles were to be in obedience to the Word of God. Without having the house to worship in, destitute of almost everything, they earnestly tried to please God by leaving the ways of Babylon and submitting to the Word of God. This is another mark of the power and energy of the Spirit of God in His gracious work or recovery; He leads back to the Word of God and gives power to walk in obedience.

Verses 5-7. It was a complete return to the Law of God. Continual burnt offerings were offered, new moons and the set feasts of Jehovah were kept. Then the spirit of sacrifice was also manifested—they offered a free-will offering unto the Lord. And though the foundation of the Temple was not yet laid, they gave money to the masons and to the carpenters in anticipation of the laying of the foundation and building of the Temple. Meat, drink and oil were given to them of Zidon and Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa. Permission had been given to do this by King Cyrus.

Verses 8-13. We doubt not that their faith also was tested in the beginning, for nine months passed by before the work began. It was in the second month of the second year after their arrival in Jerusalem, when the Levites from twenty years and upward were appointed by Zerubbabel and Jeshua "to set forward the work of the house of the Lord." The leaders were foremost in the work, and assoc-

iated the people with themselves in the blessed enterprise. They were "laborers together" (1 Cor. iii:9). They took hold of the work in earnest. The order in this chapter is the building of the altar-worship; obedience to the Word of God, and then whole-souled and united service for the Lord. This is the order still for God's people. And in that work God's order was not ignored but conscientiously followed, for the Levites are mentioned first (Numbers iv; 1 Chron. xxiii:24). In all things they adhered strictly to the Word of God. And when the work was actually begun a holy enthusiasm took hold of them, and all the people praised the Lord with a great shout. It was a great celebration, led by the priests in their apparel, with trumpets. Next came the sons of Asaph with cymbals. Their praise was after the ordinance of David, King of Israel. They sang together by courses in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord "because He is good, for His mercy endureth forever toward Israel." Then all the people shouted with a great shout. The Spirit of praise took hold upon their hearts. They celebrated the goodness and mercy of Jehovah towards His people, which are endless. But there were also tears. The old men, priests and Levites, and others who still remembered the Solomonic Temple in its great beauty, wept with a loud voice; while others shouted aloud for joy. The voice of the shouting and of the weeping was so mingled together that it could not be discerned. The tears were occasioned by remembering the glories of the former days, which had passed away.

"Joy was in His presence and acceptable. Tears confessed the truth and testified a just sense of what God had been for His people, and of the blessing they had once enjoyed under His hand. Tears recognised, alas! that which the people of God had been for God; and these tears were acceptable to Him. The weeping could not be discerned from the shout of joy; this was a truthful result, natural and sad, yet becoming in the presence of God. For He rejoices in the joy of His people, and He understands their tears. It was, indeed, a true expression of the state of things."*

*Synopsis.

And when we too remember the former things and present conditions in the ruin and confusion all around us in that which professes His Name, we also weep. And yet we shout and praise Him when we remember His mercy, which endureth forever.

CHAPTER IV.

1. The Offer of the Samaritans Refused. 1–6.
2. The Letter to King Artaxerxes. 7–16.
3. The King's Reply. 17–22.
4. The Work is Stopped. 23–24.

Verses 1-6. The adversaries* were the Samaritans. They had watched silently the work of restoration and then appeared before Zerubbabel and the chief of the fathers and said unto them, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God, as ye do, and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esar-haddon King of Assur, who brought us "up hither." These words revealed their true origin. They were a mongrel race settled by heathen kings in the conquered territory of the house of Israel, the ten tribes. We find the history relating to them in 2 Kings xvii:24. The King of Assyria brought men from Babylon, Cuthah, Ara, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and colonized them in Samaria. They were a wicked lot, and the Lord punished them by sending lions in their midst. Then they appealed to the Assyrian King and expressed a desire to get acquainted with the "manner of the God in the land." Priests of Jeroboam, who were captives, were then sent to them. One of these priests taught them in Beth-el the corrupt worship which had been the downfall of the ten tribes. The result was "they feared the Lord ,and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places." They served their own idols at the same time. The record saith, "Unto this day they do after the former manners, they fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or

*There is an interesting correspondence with the Book of Acts. After the Spirit of God had begun His blessed work, the enemy from without and then within started his hindering work.

after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel." These Assyrians married Israelitish women who had been left in the land.* These corrupt people with their well sounding words remind us of the Gibeonites in Joshua's day. They illustrate the wiles of the devil. The leaders of the remnant refused them participation in the building of the house of the Lord. They realized that they were a separated people and to permit these Samaritans to come in would have been disobedience to the Word of God, bringing His displeasure upon them. If they had been permitted to link themselves with the people of God, corruption and disaster would have been the result. But Zerubbabel and Jeshua endowed with divine wisdom knew that they were adversaries and had no call and no right to engage in the work of the Lord. It was a decisive reply they received. "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the King of Persia, hath commanded us." At once they were unmasked. They turned against them, molested them, and hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose. They also wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. The Hebrew word (used only in this passage) is **"sitnah,"** cognate with the noun "Satan." Satan was the power behind these Samaritans and their efforts to hinder the work. Their method was Satan's method. These Samaritans may well be compared with the large masses in Christendom who have a form of godliness and deny the power thereof. Like the Samaritans the unsaved multitudes in professing Christendom pretend to serve the Lord, but they are the enemies of the Cross, and their belly is their god, they mind earthly things. The New Testament demands separation from such (2 Cor.

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*In the British Museum is a cylinder containing the annals of Esarhaddon, giving the deportation of the Israelites and the settlement of colonists in their place.

vi:14-18; 2 Tim. iii:5; 2 John x:11). Fellowship with them is disastrous, for they are only natural men, not having the Spirit and are therefore unfit for Christian fellowship, for they are serving the world and its god.

Verses 7-16. Bishlam, Mithredath and Tabeel, Persians, and officials of the government, probably closely identified with the Samaritans and residents of Jerusalem, wrote a letter to King Artaxerxes.* With the eighth verse begins an Aramaic section of the book, which extends to chapter vi:18. The Syrian tongue was Aramaic. The letter is a very cunningly devised document, full of misrepresentation and falsehood, inspired by him who is "the liar, and the father of it." They accused the Jews of building Jerusalem and setting up the wall. This was a falsehood, for only the house was being built and not the wall or the city. What they said about the city, its former character of rebellion, was true, and the accuser made use of the past sins of the nation. But God had again been gracious to His people and turned their captivity. Reminding the King of the possible danger if the city were built again and fortified by a wall; and the loss of revenue, they inspired fear in the King's heart. The same accuser of the brethren, liar and falsifier, who stood behind these letter writers, is still at work and will continue till he is cast out (Rev. xii).

Verses 17-22. The King received the letter and instituted a search into the former history of Jerusalem, which verified what the letter claimed, and he commanded at once that the city should not be built. The falsehood that they were building the city and the wall was not discovered. The enemy was successful. Yet a faithful God watched over it all.

Verses 23-24. We can well imagine that when the letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai and their companions, with what a feverish haste they must have rushed up to Jerusalem, and made them cease from the work by force and

*Ahasuerus is a regal title, meaning "the venerable King;" Artaxerxes also is such a title, meaning "the great King."

power. "Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius, King of Persia." The remnant was severely tested, and at that time there set in a decline. The former energy seems to have left them, as we find when we consider Haggai's message. Nor do we read anything at the close of this chapter about turning to the Lord in prayer.

CHAPTER V.

1. The Prophetic Ministry of Haggai and Zechariah. 1.
2. The Result of their Ministry. 2.
3. Tatnai's Interference. 3–5.
4. The Letter to Darius. 6–17.

Verse 1. At that critical time when the enemy seemed to have triumphed, and they were losing their interest, God graciously intervened by sending them His two messengers the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Their great prophetic messages will be more fully taken up in our annotations on the books which contain their prophecies. The voice of prophecy is always heard when the people of God are in decline. The greatest prophets appeared at the darkest period of Israel—Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. Two months before Zechariah began his prophetic ministry Haggai lifted up his voice and addressed Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua). It was the Word of the Lord which he communicated to the princely and priestly leaders of the people. This first message gives an interesting light upon the situation of the remnant.* The people were saying "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." This they must have said on account of their enemies; they were waiting for a more providential time, when they could pursue the building of the house. The next words of Haggai reveal the moral condition of the people: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" Then the exhortation, "Consider your ways." From these words we learn that they had

*Read Haggai, chapter 1.

settled down in comfort and were more occupied with building themselves houses than with finishing the house of the Lord. And God had dealt with them for this neglect; they had suffered on account of it (Hag. i:6-11).

Verse 2. When the burning message of Haggai was delivered the Lord revived them again. They arose from their state of apathy and began to build the house of the Lord, the prophets of God helping them. The book of Haggai tells us that they all obeyed the voice of the Lord their God . . . and the people did fear before the Lord. No sooner had they obeyed and feared the Lord than another message came through the prophet: "I am with you, saith the Lord." They no longer feared their enemies, nor the King's command, but they feared the Lord, and at once the work was vigorously resumed and the house finished (vi:15). The Word of the Lord was used in their revival. Every true and genuine revival always started and always will start with the Word of God, hearing and believing what God has spoken.

Verses 3-5. This new start attracted at once the attention of their enemies. Tatnai, governor on this side of the river and Shethar-boznai with their companions appeared on the scene.* They asked the questions, "Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up the wall What are the names of the men that make this building?"† Thus the enemy made another effort to hinder the work. He never fails to attack that which is done to the glory of God. But these enemies did not reckon with the Keeper of Israel who neither sleeps nor slumbers. Little did they know that what they were doing would lead to victory for God's people and would result in finishing the house of God. The

*In cuneiform tablets of the first and third years of Darius Hystaspis a governor Ustnai is mentioned. He is described in Assyrian as the governor of the province.

†"We" in verse 4 is "they," Tatnai and his companions. See verse 10.

eye of God was upon the elders of the Jews. He gave them strength, courage and assurance, so that they could persevere in the work. God was with them, and who then could be against them? God restrained Tatnai from giving order to suspend the work, so that they worked right on. Blessed are all the servants of the Lord who toil in the fear of the Lord, knowing that His eye is upon them and that He sustains all who put their trust in Him.

Verses 6-17. Then Tatnai and his associates sent a letter to King Darius, which gives the unreported details of their visit to Jerusalem. The letter tells us that the house was built with great stones and timber in the walls, and that all prospered in their hands. Zerubbabel and his companions had answered the inquiries to Tatnai as follows: "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth." Thus they gave a witness of themselves and then related what had taken place, and how Cyrus had made the decree to build the house of God. The letter stated that Sheshbazzar (Zerubbabel) had laid the foundation and that the house was still unfinished. Then follows the request: "Now, therefore, if it seem good to the King, let there be search made in the King's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the King to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the King send his pleasure to us concerning the matter." The builders must have had perfect peace about this letter, knowing that the Lord was with them.

CHAPTER VI.

1. The Search of the King and the Result. 1–5.
2. The Command of Darius. 6–12.
3. The King's Command Obeyed. 13.
4. The House finished. 14–15.
5. The Dedication of the House. 16–18.
6. The Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread. 19–22.

Verses 1-5. King Darius had a search made in the place where the records of the empire were kept, "in the house of the rolls." The word "rolls" is "books" and these consisted

of clay tablets on which the cuneiform inscriptions were preserved. Neither the Aramaic nor the Hebrew language has a word for clay tablets. Whole libraries of such clay tablets were found at Nineveh and elsewhere, and can now be seen in different museums. The searchers found the desired record at Achmetha.* Divine providence had preserved this interesting command of Cyrus, and the same providence guided the searchers to the place where it was kept. From it we learn interesting details. Cyrus gave instructions concerning the foundations, the height and the breadth of the building; the expenses were to be met from the King's house, i. e., the royal treasure house. Persian Kings controlled the religious affairs of the nation; but Cyrus acted under divine guidance of the Lord (chapter i:1).

Verses 6-12. Darius answered the communication of Tatnai and Shethar-boznai at once. He commands, "Be ye far from hence," do not hinder the work; let the work of this house of God alone. And furthermore he directed that the Jews were to be assisted in the building of the house by the paying of the expenses. Darius was anxious that the house should be built and speedily completed. The material mentioned was for the sacrifices and offerings. Young bullocks, rams and lambs for the burnt-offerings. Wheat, oil and salt for the meal-offering, and wine for the drink-offering. All these things were to be given to the priests without fail day by day. "That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savour unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the King and of his sons." God was working again, and used Darius as His instrument for the accomplishment of His own purposes. All the enemy was doing to hinder the work turned out to its furtherance. How often this has been in the history of Israel and the Church. The decree of Darius demanded the death penalty for all who altered the command he had given. "And the God that

*The Ecbatana of Greek writers, the capital city of Media, which is the modern Hamadan.

hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all Kings and peoples that shall put their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed." These words warrant a belief that Darius had knowledge of the God of heaven. The events which transpired during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in the Babylonian Empire, when Daniel was there, as well as the things which happened under the reign of the other Darius (Daniel vi) may have been fully known to Darius Hystaspis who gave this decree. And solemn were his words that God would destroy all Kings and people who alter or destroy this house of God. How this came repeatedly to pass history tells us.*

Verse 13. What Darius commanded was speedily done. All opposition ended and the enemies were completely defeated. God had undertaken in behalf of His trusting people, whose faith had been revived through the messages of Haggai and Zechariah.

Verses 14-15. With revived zeal the elders builded, and they prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo. Haggai's ministry stirred up the conscience of the people, exhorting them to consider their ways, which must have led them to seek His face. Zechariah is the prophet of glory. The vision of glory, the ultimate victory of God's people, the coming of the King and setting up of His Kingdom, the future overthrow of all their enemies—this vision of the coming glory became an inspiration for them. God's people need this twofold ministry which is so abundantly supplied in the Word of God. They builded and finished the house according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of the great Kings Cyrus and Darius.† The house

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*Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod and the Romans defiled and destroyed the house, and God's wrath came upon them for it.

†"And Artaxerxes, King of Persia," some claim should be omitted from the text.

was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the King.

Verses 16-18. Then the dedication of the house took place. It was a feast of great joy. "The feast of dedication" which the Jews keep (Chanukah) does not commemorate the dedication of this house, but the cleansing of the Temple from the defilement of Antiochus Epiphanes. Tradition claims that Psalms cxxxviii, cxlvi and cxlviii were composed by Haggai and Zechariah, and used in the dedication ceremony. But what a contrast with the magnificent dedication of the Solomonic Temple! Here they offered a hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and for a sin offering twelve he-goats. At the dedication of the first Temple Solomon offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep (2 Chron. vii:7). And the greatest contrast with Solomon's Temple, the glory cloud; the visible sign of Jehovah's presence which filled the house; was absent. No glory came to manifest the fact that Jehovah dwelt in the midst of His people. In the future another Temple will stand again in Jerusalem, and into that Temple the glory of the Lord will enter once more (Ezek. xliii:1-3). It is the millennial Temple which will be erected by converted Israel after the King has come back. Of this glorious event Zechariah bore witness: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined unto the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee" (Zech. ii:10-11). These prophetic words were certainly not fulfilled in the dedication of the second Temple, nor have they been fulfilled since. Perhaps this prophecy was the prophecy of hope and comfort for the godly then, as well as Haggai's prediction (Hag. ii:7-9). But note well the obedience to God's Word manifested in the dedication service—"as it is written in the book of Moses."

Verses 19-22. The feast of Passover and unleavened bread was kept also by the children of the captivity.* They were true to the written Word. As to the meaning of this feast see our annotations on Exodus xii, Leviticus xxiii and 1 Corinthians v.

"The connection is exceedingly beautiful. The house of their God finished, His people celebrate the memorial of their redemption from the land of Egypt, and thus remind themselves, to the praise of Jehovah, of the ground on which they stood, and of the fact that the foundation of all their blessing, of all God's actings in grace towards them was the blood of the slain Lamb. This, according to the word of Moses, was "a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations" (Exodus xii:42). Nothing could show more distinctly that these children of the captivity were at this moment in possession of the mind of the Lord than their observance of the passover. Passing by the glories of the kingdom, they travelled upward until they reached the charter of all they possessed, whether in title or in prospect, and there confessed God as the God of their salvation. They thus built on what God was for them on the ground of the blood of the Passover Lamb, and they found in that, as individual souls ever find, a rock which is both immutable and immovable. Their hearts were in this feast; 'for,' as we read, 'the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure.' (See Numbers ix:10–14.) They discerned what was due to Him whose feast they kept."†

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*Those who had separated themselves from the filthiness of the heathen were not proselytes, Gentiles who turned to Israel; they were Jews who had married heathen women (chapter x:11).

†E. Dennett.

II. THE RETURN UNDER EZRA AND HIS REFORMATION.

CHAPTER VII.

1. The Journey of Ezra to Jerusalem. 1–10.
2. The Decree of Artaxerxes. 11–26.
3. Ezra's Thanksgiving. 27–28.

Verses 1-10. The record of the return under Zerubbabel and the rebuilding of the Temple ends with the previous chapter. Many years passed after the Temple had been built before the godly Ezra and his companions returned to Jerusalem. No record whatever is in existence covering the years which intervened between Zerubabbel's expedition and work, and Ezra's expedition. The critics claim that "it was in these apparently barren years that the priestly code was elaborated by the priests who had not left Babylon, and that part at least of the second half of Isaiah (chapter xl, etc.) was composed and put together in Babylon." But what historical foundation for their theory can they offer? There is nothing in existence which in any way warrants such claims. The evidence that Moses wrote the Pentateuch and that Isaiah is the author of the entire book which bears his name are overwhelming. The theory of a priestly code, that the priestly laws of Leviticus were collected in Babylon and brought back by Ezra, is an invention.

What became of Zerubbabel is not known. But we know that a sad decline among the returned remnant set in. Their moral and religious condition had suffered a severe relapse. Perhaps these very conditions moved Ezra to leave Babylon and go to Jerusalem.

It was in the seventh year of Artaxerxes,* King of Persia,

*The character of our work forbids an attempt to enlarge upon the identity of the different rulers mentioned in Ezra and Nehemiah—which is a difficult matter, involving a careful examination of chronology. We suggest as a good book on chronology *The Romance of Bible Chronology*, by M. Anstey.

that Ezra went up. The genealogy of Ezra is given, showing that he was a direct descendant of Aaron, the chief priest. Ezra was "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given." A blessed testimony that the Law of Moses was given by God, and not put together piece-meal, corrected, revised and added to by different hands. Ezra, occupied with the Law and the Word of God, desired to go up to Jerusalem. God put it into his heart, and the Gentile King granted him all his request. In all this the hand of the Lord is acknowledged. "According to the hand of the Lord his God upon him." This phrase we meet a number of times (viii:6, 9, 28; viii:18, 22, 31); and it shows how this man of God trusted in the Lord for guidance. He saw His hand in having all his request granted by Artaxerxes. It was the good hand of God who brought him to Jerusalem (verse 9). His hand strengthened him (verse 28). The good hand of the Lord is again acknowledged in bringing them ministers (viii:18) and in deliverance (verse 31). The same hand which was for good upon Ezra, which guided, kept and shielded him, is still upon all his people who trust Him and are obedient to His Word.

With Ezra a company of people went up to Jerusalem, 1,496 in all. They left on the first day of the first month, and arrived on the first day of the fifth month, corresponding to the end of July or beginning of August. The distance they travelled by way of Carchemish was over 800 miles.

In verse 10 we have the secret of Ezra's piety: "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Diligently and prayerfully he sought the Truth and the will of God in the Word of God. The Law of the Lord was his joy and delight. How he must have searched the Scriptures with deep exercise of soul. This is the foundation of godliness. The heart must enter into the things of God as revealed in His Word. And his aim was "to do it;" to live according to the Truth God had given him. Finally, the third desire

of Ezra was "to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Heart preparation in the Word, obedience to the Word, must be the marks of the true servant of the Lord.

Verses 11-26. The copy of the letter that Artaxerxes gave to Ezra is now recorded. This section is again in Aramaic. In the salutation of the letter Artaxerxes calls himself "king of kings" and addresses Ezra as the scribe of the law of the God of heaven. There can be no question that Artaxerxes was divinely moved in all he did. The decree states that all Israelites, priests and Levites in his realm who are minded of their own free will to up to Jerusalem, may go with Ezra. The name of God, the law of God, the house of God are constantly used in this document. Then the King and his seven counsellors freely gave silver and gold "unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem." In a future day, when all Israel is saved, when Christ comes again, the Gentiles and their Kings will offer their silver and gold (Isaiah lx; Ps. lxxii:10-11). Besides the silver and gold Artaxerxes and his counsellors gave, there were other offerings of non-Jews and of the Jewish residents of Babylon. The King had perfect confidence in Ezra. After buying bullocks, rams, lambs, etc., the King wrote, "And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of your God."

Verses 27-28. Then Ezra broke out in a beautiful doxology. He blessed the Lord God of his fathers. He had put all this in the King's heart. And Ezra was strengthened as the hand of the Lord His God was upon him.

CHAPTER VIII.

1. Those who Returned with Ezra. 1–14.
2. The Gathering at Ahava. 15–20.
3. The Fast Proclaimed. 21–23.
4. The Appointment of Guardians. 24–30.
5. The Departure and Arrival in Jerusalem. 31–36.

Verses 1-14. The names of those who gathered around

Ezra and went up with him are here recorded. In view of the magnificent decree and liberality of Artaxerxes, the company was very small. The majority preferred Babylon, and remained there. The faithful ones are known to God, and their names are here forever written in His Word. Though the Gentile monarch had given the decree, and the people were abundantly supplied with all necessary means, the undertaking was one of faith. They came out of Babylon trusting the Lord; they marched on in faith. It must be especially noticed that only males are mentioned. The mixed marriages of which we read in the next chapter most likely were the result of the fact that no women had joined Ezra's expedition.

Verses 15-20. Ezra gathered them together at the river that runneth to Ahava, which probably was a branch of the Euphrates, near Babylon. There they dwelt in their tents for three days. They were pilgrims and strangers, and had gone forth like Abraham, the father of the nation. Ezra viewed the people and discovered the absence of the Levites. While a small number of Levites had gone up with Zerubbabel, none had joined Ezra. Only two priests were present, Gershom, son of Phinehas, and Daniel, son of Ithamar. What indifference this reveals! They had settled down in the enemy's land and were satisfied to remain there. They were minding earthly things, and the things of God were forgotten by them. Still they were Levites in their holy calling. It is so today with many who are no doubt saved, but they are worldly minded, and have but little desire to live in the separation demanded by Him from His people. Ezra was not willing to leave the Levites behind, knowing how absolutely necessary they were for the house of God. How Ezra must have looked to God! Then he acted, and through the good hand of God, which he once more acknowledged, a number of Levites and Nethinim joined the party.

Verses 21-23. He proclaimed a fast. The man of God

felt the need of seeking God's face and His gracious protection. The fasting was the outward sign of deep humiliation and an expression of their dependence, "to seek of Him a straight way, for us and for our little ones, and for all our substance." The need of guidance as well as protection was fully recognized by the gathered company, and they trusted the Lord for both. This is still the blessed way of faith for God's servant, and for the children of God. How great would be the success and the blessing if at all times and in all service God's people would first seek his face, humble themselves in His presence and trust Him fully. Ezra had told the King that he trusted the Lord, that His hand is upon all them for good that seek Him, and so he was ashamed to ask a military escort to protect them against robbers, who might waylay them and rob them of their possessions. He knew His God was the best shield, and His angels, the ministers used in guarding His people and keeping evil away from them, would be the unseen companions of the caravan. "So we fasted and besought our God for this, and He was intreated of us." Their prayers were answered. And He still answers faith.

Verses 24-30. Faith in God did not make Ezra careless. He felt his great responsibility and made the most careful preparations. He set apart twelve of the chief priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them. Levites were also selected by him (verse 30). To their custody he committed the holy vessels, as well as the silver and the gold which had been so freely given. Then he gave them the charge, "Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also and the silver and gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers. Watch ye and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord." He had weighed into their hand 650 talents of silver (about $1,250,000) and of gold 100 talents (about $3,000,000) besides the costly

vessels of silver and gold. This careful weighing of everything when they received the costly treasures, and the weighing when they delivered the same in Jerusalem, does not mean that Ezra entertained any doubt as to the honesty of the priests and Levites. It was done to avoid all suspicion. The same principle is laid down in the New Testament for the Church: "Provide for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. viii:21).

Verses 31-36. Then the departure was made on the twelfth day of the first month. In faith and complete dependence on God they set out towards the land of their fathers. And the Lord honored their faith. "And the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days." They must have had many narrow escapes, but as they constantly trusted in the Lord, in His good hand of mercy and power, He delivered them from all dangers. The Lord who answered their faith and kept them is the same today, and never disappoints faith. His hand is the same as then, and we too can experience His gracious deliverance. The journey occupied not quite four months. The three days at the end of the journey correspond to the three days before the journey began at the river Ahava (viii:15). What praise they must have rendered to God during these three days in Jerusalem, when their eyes beheld once more the beloved city and the house of the Lord!

On the fourth day the treasures were turned over and were weighed in the house of God. This was done by Meremoth, the son of Uriah, the priest. He is mentioned by Nehemiah as one of the builders of the wall (Neh. iii:4, 21). With him was Eleazar, the son of Phinehas. Associated with them were Jozabad, the son of Jeshua (mentioned also in x:23 and Neh. vii:7) and Noadiah, the son of Binnui. Thus in the house of God account was rendered, as all His people

will have to give an account before the judgment seat of Christ.

Burnt offerings were then offered, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs and twelve he-goats for a sin offering. It is especially to be noticed that the small remnant which had returned embraced in their faith all Israel. "All Israel" will some day be saved and be brought back to the land, through Him who is the true burnt and sin offering. And as their faith included all their brethren, the whole house of Israel, though they were not with them, so our faith must include all the Saints of God.

After having discharged their solemn obligation, giving God the first place, they "delivered the Kings' commissions unto the King's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river; and they furthered the people and the house of God."

CHAPTER IX.

1. Ezra's Astonishment and Grief. 1–4.
2. Ezra's Confession and Prayer. 5–15.

Verses 1-4. When all these things had been done (that are related in chapter viii:33-36) Ezra was confronted by a very sad condition of the people, and even the priests and the Levites. The princes (civil leaders) came to Ezra and told him that the demanded separation according to the Law, between God's people and the Canaanitish inhabitants of the land, had not been obeyed. The people had taken of their daughters for themselves and of their sons "so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of the lands; yea the hand of the princes and rulers hath been first in this trespass." Not alone had they intermarried, but they were also doing according to their abominations. Not alone had they fallen into the evil things of the former inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, but they were also contaminated with the wicked things of the Ammonites,

the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites. In doing this they had wilfully broken the command of the Lord as given in Exodus xxxiv:12-16. God's people were to be holy, a separated people. Israel was married unto Jehovah; their marriage to the heathen was disobedience to the Law and unfaithfulness to Jehovah. It was an alliance with the world. God demanded separation of Israel; He demands the same of His people in the New Testament. "But as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter i:15-16). Like Israel, believers in the New Testament are said to be married unto Christ (Romans vii:4; 2 Cor. xi:2). And therefore God's Spirit warns against alliance with the world. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. vi:14). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John ii:15). "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world, maketh himself an enemy of God" (James iv:4). That the returned remnant, after a few years of the completion of the Temple and after the gracious and remarkable deliverance from Babylon, could plunge into such depths of degradation, shows what the heart of man is. As it has been said, when Saints fall into sin, it is sometimes into worse and grosser forms of sin than those committed by the people of the world. It equally manifests the infinite patience and long-suffering of God, in bearing with His people and not dealing with them at once in judgment.

Let us listen to the words of pious Ezra, what he said and did after receiving this sad report. "And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat

astonished until the evening sacrifice." He was seized with horror. The rending of his garments was the outward expression of his indignation and grief (Gen. xxxvii:29; Lev. x:6; Judges xi:35; Esther iv:1). The plucking of the hair is also a sign of sorrow (Job i:20; Ezek. vii:18). But how his heart must have felt the dishonor done to Jehovah's holy Name! How he was deeply affected by the sins of the people. Would to God such a spirit of deep grief and humiliation were more manifested today over the sad and worldly conditions of those who profess that worthy Name! His grief and sorrow brought others, who were also trembling at the words of God, to his side, and he sat in their presence astonished till the evening sacrifice.

Verses 5-15. When the evening sacrifice came he arose from his deep affliction and sorrow, with his garments rent. It is the sacrifice, the burnt-offering, which leads him to approach God; he trusted in the efficacy of the sacrifice as the ground on which he could appear before God. He knew by sacrifice he could come near to God and receive the answer. All this blessedly foreshadows the sacrifice of Christ and our approach to God through His finished work on the cross. The prayer which follows is like Daniel's great prayer (Daniel ix:4-19). Daniel also received his answer at the time of the evening sacrifice. Ezra fell upon his knees and spread out his hands unto the Lord. What a confession of sins and deepest humiliation breathe in the opening sentences of this remarkable prayer! He is ashamed and blushes to lift his face up to God. Iniquities are owned as covering the head of the people and "the guiltiness is grown unto the heavens." Not alone is the present guilt acknowledged, but he owns the guilt of the nation from its very start. Furthermore he declares God's righteousness and justice in dealing with them in judgment. "For our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hands of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to spoiling, and to confusion of face, as it is

today." He confessed the sins of the people and owned it all in His presence. Such humiliation and confession is always pleasing to God, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James iv:6).

Then, after having confessed and owned the sins of his brethren and justified God in His judgment upon them, he mentions the grace which had been manifested towards the people in bringing back the remnant from the captivity. The remnant through His mercy had escaped, and God had given them "a nail in His holy place" (see Isaiah xxii:23). Like a nail in the wall fixed and immovable, so God had established them in Jerusalem. And after the recital of all these mercies, he brings into the light of God's presence their sin, their disobedience and ingratitude once more (verses 10-12).

"It should also be observed that Ezra does not once pray for forgiveness. Nay, with any intelligence of the mind of God, it was impossible that he should do so. When there is known evil in our hearts or in the assembly, our first responsibility is to judge it, not to pray for forgiveness. Thus, when Joshua lay on his face before the Lord, after the defeat of Israel by the men of Ai, the Lord said, 'Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned,' etc. And yet how often does Satan beguile the Lord's people, in a time of manifested evil, by suggesting through one or another, Let us pray about it. Confess our sins we surely should, but even then only as seeking grace and strength to deal with the evil, and to separate ourselves from it; for if Ezra lay before the Lord in this chapter owning his people's guilt, we shall see him in the next energetic in dealing with the sin he had confessed, and resting not until it had been put away."*

CHAPTER X.

1. The Effect of Ezra's Prayer on the People. 1–4.
2. Ezra Summons an Assembly. 5–8.
3. The Gathering. Confession and the Evil Judged. 9–17.
4. The Register of those who had Married Strange Women. 18–44.

Verses 1-4. Ezra's prayer, confession and humiliation

*E. Dennett, Exposition of Ezra.

were before the house of the Lord." The people saw his great sorrow and his tears, they heard his words confessing the nation's sins. It produced a wonderful effect among the people. "There assembled unto him out of Israel a great congregation of men and women and children, for the people wept very sore." Was this great weeping real contrition over their disobedience? or did they weep in anticipation of the separation from the wives they had taken? No doubt they thought of what the demanded separation would mean for them; yet it was an aroused conscience which produced the tears of repentance.

Schechaniah's voice is heard in behalf of the people. He was a son of Jehiel. His own father is mentioned among those who had taken strange wives (verse 26). His words then must have condemned his own father. He said, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land." He acknowledged the sin of the people in violating the direct commandment of the Lord. But he also had confidence in the mercy of God, that not all was lost on account of their disobedience, "yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." Yet this hope and mercy could only be realized by self-judgment and by putting away all the wives and such as were born of them. He therefore said, "Let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my Lord, and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law." The Law demanded the dismissal of these wives and children, for they were unclean, and admission into the congregation of Israel had to be denied to them. How different it is under grace! In 1 Cor. vii:10, etc., we read what grace has done even for an unbelieving husband who is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife who is sanctified by the believing husband, and that their children are not unclean, but holy.*

*See Annotated Bible Vol. II New Testament, Page 109, as to the meaning of these words.

Then Schechaniah addressed weeping Ezra: "Arise! for this matter belongeth unto thee; we also will be with thee; be of good courage and do it." These words must have dried Ezra's tears, for they evidence the answer to his humiliation and prayer. Confession, humiliation, self-judgment and putting away the evil are always the condition of the restoration of God's people.

Verses 5-8. Ezra took hold at once. The priests, Levites and all Israel had to swear that they would act upon this word. But Ezra's grief was not ended. He arose and went into the chambers of Johanan, the son of Eliashib.* He did not eat bread, nor did he drink water. He still mourned because of the trangression of the people. God's presence was sought by this deeply spiritual man of God, and in His holy presence he felt anew the sin of the people. What deep soul exercise Ezra passed through! This is what is so sadly lacking in our own days. So many make light of the sin and worldliness of those who profess the Name of Christ, there is but little heart searching, true humiliation and self-judgment to be seen. Such is the spirit of Laodicea.

A proclamation was then made. The time to act had come. All the returned captives were to gather themselves together in Jerusalem. It had to be within three days. Neglect of this commandment meant the confiscation of their substance and separation from the congregation of Israel.

Verses 9-17. The great gathering takes place. They all obeyed the Word. We see them sitting in the wide space before the house of the Lord. They were a trembling, frightened company, on account of this matter and also the great rain, for the cold and rainy season had started in.

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*Johanan means "the Lord is gracious;" Eliashib means "whom God restored." Significant names! Indeed there is a message in all these names. We hope to publish a dictionary of all Hebrew and Greek names in their translation and make it an appendix of the Annotated Bible, so that the meaning of each name can be easily ascertained for the deeper study of the Word.

Ezra addresses the multitude in simple but firm words. Once more he mentions their sin and the guilt which rests upon them on account of it. He demands confession, and separation from the peoples of the land and from the strange women. There was an immediate response: "As thou hast said concerning us, so must we do." Then a plan is inaugurated to bring the separation about in as speedy a manner as possible. What self-denial and heartaches this must have meant! In verse 15 we read of those "who were employed about this matter." But the translation of this sentence is more than doubtful. It has been rendered "they stood up against this." If there was opposition it was not opposition to the separation decree. They probably opposed the method which had been suggested; they may have demanded an immediate action.

Verses 18-44. The examination of the whole matter as agreed upon began on the first day of the first month (Nisan —March-April), the time of the New Year, the new beginning according to Exodus xii:1. Then follows the list of the men who had married the strange women. God's record is again before us in these names. The names of the priests come first. Theirs was the greater responsibility and guilt. The sons of Joshua head the list. What an illustration of what man is, that the sons of the high-priest, who, with Zerubbabel, had been such great instruments of the Lord to lead the first captives back, should corrupt themselves with these women! They gave their hand that they would put away their wives, and confessing themselves guilty, they brought a ram for an offering. In all seventeen priests were guilty, and six Levites. The guilty singers and porters are given by name in verse 24. Then follow eighty-six more names who had all defiled themselves by strange women.

Ezra's great work was finished. In Nehemiah we read how he was still active, ministering to the people in spiritual things, in reading and expounding the Word of God (Neh. viii:8).

NEHEMIAH

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The Book of Nehemiah.

Introduction.

The Book of Nehemiah is the latest of the historical books of the Old Testament. It is the continuation of the history of the company of people which had returned under Zerubbabel and Ezra to the land. In Ezra we saw the remnant getting back and rebuilding the temple, the place of worship. In Nehemiah we have the record of the rebuilding of the walls of Jersualem, and the restoration of the civil condition of the people, the partial and outward re-establishment of the Jews in the land. The Book bears the name of Nehemiah, because he is the leading person in the recorded events, and likewise the inspired author of the main portion of this record. Two other persons by the name of Nehemiah are mentioned in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. One was the son of Azbuk (Neh. iii:16) and the other belonged to the returning remnant under Zerubbabel (Ezra ii:3 and Neh. vii:7). From these, Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah must be distinguished. His genealogy is obscure. Besides being the son of Hachaliah, the only other mention of his family is found in chapter vii:2; there he speaks of his brother Hanani. Some class him as a priest for the reason that he heads the list of priests. But his name is given there as the princely leader of the people. As to his office, he carried two titles. He is called "Tirshatha" in chapter viii:9, which means ruler or governor. In chapter xii:26 his title is also governor; the word used is "Pechah," the Turkish word "pasha."

There can be no doubt that this man of God wrote chapters i to vii:5; it is an autobiography. Chapter vii:6–73 is a quotation of a register of names, which differs in numerous places from the register in Ezra ii:1–70. Both were probably copied from public documents, perhaps from the Book of Chronicles mentioned in chapter xii:23. The discrepancies between Ezra ii and Nehemiah vii show that Nehemiah did not copy from Ezra's record. Chapters viii to x, it is claimed by some, were not written by the hand of Nehemiah. It has been suggested that Ezra is the author. The remaining section, chapters xi to xiii, bears the clear mark of Nehemiah's pen.

The History it Contains.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer in the palace of Shushan, serving Artaxerxes the King. When he learned the deplorable condition of the people in the land of his fathers, he sat down, wept and prayed.

The King discovered the source of Nehemiah's sorrow, and permitted him to go, giving him full authority to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and to help his people. This was in the year 445 B. C. Nehemiah reached the city the same year, and was for twelve years actively engaged in the welfare work of Jerusalem. The city wall was finished and the work done in spite of the many hindrances and obstacles the enemy put in the way. Sanballat, the Moabite, and Tobiah, the Ammonite, were Nehemiah's chief enemies. With them were allied the Arabians, Ammonites and Ashdodites. They tried to hinder the work by mocking the workmen, then by threatening them with violence. When their attempts failed to arrest the restoration of the wall, then they tried craft. Nehemiah came out victorious. And there were also internal troubles among the people, threatening disruption. Thus as Daniel the prophet had announced, the wall was rebuilt and the work finished in troublous times (Dan. ix:25).

After the city had been fortified, the wall built, religious reforms were inaugurated. At the watergate the Law was read and expounded by Ezra the priest. The Feast of Tabernacles was also celebrated, followed by a solemn fast, repentance and a prayer of humiliation and confession of sins. A covenant then was made. In all this Nehemiah was assisted by the pious Ezra. About 432 B. C. Nehemiah returned to Babylon. His stay there does not seem to have been very long, and he went back to Jerusalem. After his return he demanded the separation of all the mixed multitude from among the people. He also expelled the Ammonite Tobiah from the chamber which the high priest Eliashib had prepared for him in the temple. Then he chased away the son-in-law of Sanballat, a son of Joiada the high priest. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Nehemiah died at an advanced age.

Interesting light has been thrown on this Book and the conditions of the Jews of that period by the recent discovery of Aramaic papyri near Assouan. These papers were written twenty-four years after Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem, and sixteen years after the death of King Artaxerxes; they were therefore probably written during the lifetime of Nehemiah. These papyri speak of the Jewish colony in the land, and the house of the Lord with its worship, as well as what the enemy did to the people.

The Spiritual Lessons.

Nehemiah is a beautiful character well worth a close study. He was a man of prayer, who habitually turned to God, seeking His wisdom and His strength. The rebuilding of the wall, the different gates, and the men who toiled there, the attempts of the enemies and their defeat, all contain truths of much spiritual value and help.

The reader will find the spiritual and dispensational lessons pointed out in the annotations of each chapter.

The Divisions of Nehemiah.

The contents of the Book are best divided into three sections.

I. HOW NEHEMIAH RETURNED TO JERUSALEM; AND THE BUILDING OF THE WALL. Chapters I–VII.

II. THE SPIRITUAL REVIVAL. Chapters VIII–X.

III. THE PEOPLE ESTABLISHED; THE DEDICATION OF THE WALL, AND NEHEMIAH'S FINAL ACTS. Chapters XI–XIII.

Analysis and Annotations.

I. HOW NEHEMIAH RETURNED TO JERUSALEM; AND THE BUILDING OF THE WALL.

Chapters I–VII.

CHAPTER I.

1. Nehemiah hears of the Condition of Jerusalem (verses 1–3).
2. His great Sorrow, and Prayer (verses 4–11).

Verses 1–3. "The words of Nehemiah ('the Lord is comfort') the son of Hachaliah." It is therefore the personal narrative of his experience which is before us in the first six chapters of this Book, in which he describes his soul exercise, and how the Lord made it possible for him to return to Jerusalem, and how the wall was rebuilt. Nehemiah was a young man, born in captivity, holding a position of nearness to the great Persian King and living in the beautiful palace of Shushan. He lived in luxuries, and was an honored servant of the King. It was in the month of Chisleu, in the twentieth year (445 B.C.) when Hanani his brother (chapter vii: 2) visited him with certain men out of Judah. The question he asked them at once shows the deep interest he had in God's people. "I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem." Though he had never seen Jerusalem, the city of his fathers, he loved Jerusalem and felt like all pious captives, so beautifully expressed in one of the Psalms —"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Ps. cxxxvii: 5–6). Though he lived in prosperity his heart was with his people. It was bad news which they brought him. The remnant was in great affliction and re-

proach, the wall of Jerusalem in a broken-down condition, and the gates burned with fire.

Verses 4–11. This sad news overwhelmed him with great sorrow. He sat down and wept; his mourning continued certain days. If Nehemiah was so affected by the temporal condition of Jerusalem and the affliction of the remnant, how much more should believers mourn and weep over the spiritual conditions among God's people. Yet how little of this sorrowing spirit over these conditions is known in our day! It is needed for humiliation and effectual prayer. Nehemiah did not rush at once into the presence of the King to utter his petitions. He waited and fasted certain days and then addressed the God of heaven (Ezra vi:9). He reveals in the opening words of his prayer familiarity with the Word of God. "I beseech thee, O Lord, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God (Deut. vii:21; x:17; Dan. ix:4) that keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments (Deut. vii:9; 1 Kings viii:23) let thine ear now be attentive (2 Chron. vi:40; Ps. cxxx:2) and thine eyes open (2 Chron. vi:40) that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant." After these scriptural expressions, expressing confidence in the power and faithfulness of God, Nehemiah confessed his sin and the sins of his people. "Yea, I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept thy commandments, nor thy statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandest thy servant Moses." Ezra had prayed a similar prayer, and before him Daniel in Babylon (Dan. ix). There is no flaw revealed in Nehemiah's character, as there is none in Daniel's life, yet both of these men of God went on their faces and confessed their sins and the sins of the people. They realized that they had a share in the common failure of His people. And so are we all blameworthy of the spiritual decline and failure among God's people, and should humble ourselves on account of it. It is this which is pleasing to the Lord and which assures His mercy,

But Nehemiah was also trusting in the promise of God. He was a man of faith, and cast himself upon the Word of God, knowing what the Lord had promised He is able to do. "Remember, I beseech thee, the word that Thou commandest thy servant Moses." The promise in Deut. xxx: 1–5 is especially upon his heart and mentioned by him in the presence of the Lord. In the near future this great national promise of the regathering of Israel from the ends of the earth will be fulfilled, in that day when the Lord returns. The exercise and prayer of Nehemiah will be repeated in the Jewish believing remnant during the time of Jacob's trouble, the great tribulation. Furthermore Nehemiah claims the blessing for the people on account of their covenant relation with Jehovah. They are His servants, His people, "whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power and by thy strong hand." And how he pleads for an answer. "O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who delight to fear thy name"— others were also praying —"and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." He meant the powerful monarch Artaxerxes. Yet in God's presence he looked upon him only as a man, and he knew God could use this man in behalf of His people, as He had used Cyrus.

CHAPTER II.

1. The King's Question (verses 1–2).
2. The King's Permission (verses 3–8).
3. The Arrival in Jerusalem, and the Night-ride (verses 9–16).
4. The Resolution to Build the Wall (verses 17–18).
5. The Ridicule of the Enemy, and Nehemiah's Answer (verses 19–20.

Verses 1–2. The last sentence of the previous chapter, "For I was the king's cupbearer," belongs to this chapter. Nehemiah is seen exercising the functions of the King's cupbearer, to minister to the joy and pleasure of the monarch. Notice that it was four months after his prayer. Hanani had visited his brother Nehemiah in the month Chisleu, the ninth month, and Nisan is the first month of the Jewish year. How many prayers he must have offered up during these three months! How patiently he waited for the Lord's time! He carried a heavy burden upon his heart, expressed in a sad countenance, which was at last noticed by Artaxerxes. "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing that thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart," said the King. Then was Nehemiah sore afraid, fearing the King's displeasure.

Verses 3–8. Nehemiah answered the King and acquainted him with the reason of his sadness, "why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" From the meek answer Nehemiah gave we learn that his forefathers were inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he belonged therefore to the tribe of Judah. Instead of the angry outburst Nehemiah feared, the King asked graciously, "For what dost thou make request?" How his heart must have been stirred when the King uttered these words! He had prayed four months before that the God of heaven grant him "mercy in the sight of this man." And now the answer to his prayer was at

hand. When the King had asked for his request, Nehemiah prayed again to the God of heaven. He found time to pray between the words of the King and the answer he gave him. His lips did not speak, his knees were not bowed, nor did the King see any other sign that Nehemiah prayed. Yet there was earnest believing and prevailing prayer. It was an ejaculatory prayer, the soul's cry to God, carried swiftly by the Holy Spirit to the Throne of God. This man of God every step of the way cast himself upon God; prayer was his constant resource. Such is our privilege. As we walk in His fellowship we too shall pray and look to the Lord as Nehemiah did. It is a blessed occupation to cultivate a prayerful mind; indeed it is the breathing of the new life. Whatever our experiences, the heart which is in touch with God will always turn to Him even in the smallest matters. After Nehemiah had stated his request the King granted what he had asked. His prayers were answered; God had touched the heart of the monarch. "So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time." The requested letters to the governors beyond the river to convey him till he came to Judah, and to Asaph the forester to furnish him with timber needed for the work, were granted to him. In this, like pious Ezra (Ezra vii: 6; viii: 18, 22) Nehemiah saw the power of God displayed —"according to the good hand of God upon me." Faith not only depends on God, but also sees His gracious hand and gives the glory to Him. In faith Nehemiah could say "my God," like Paul in writing to the Philippians (Phil. iv: 19).

Verses 9–16. He crossed the river Euphrates and traversed Transpotamia till he reached Samaria. He delivered the letters. Sanballat, the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite, Samaritans, are here mentioned for the first time. Sanballat may have been the governor of the Samaritan mongrel race. They were grieved exceedingly at Nehemiah's appearing, when they heard he had come "to seek the welfare of the children of Israel."

Sanballat ("Hate in disguise") is called the Horonite,

an inhabitant of Horonaim, which was a southern Moabite city (Isa. xv:5; Jerem. xlviii:3, 5, 34) and Tobiah, the servant, an Ammonite. They came from Moab and Ammon, blood-relations of Israel, being bastard offspring of Lot. The Moabite and Ammonite was not to come into the congregation of God forever; the curse rested upon them. They did not meet Israel with bread and water when they came forth from Egypt. They hated the people of God, and had hired Balaam the son of Beor to curse Israel (Deut. xxiii:3–6). They were the bitter enemies of Israel, which explains the displeasure of Sanballat and Tobiah when Nehemiah came with the King's credentials. They represented typically those who profess to be children of God, but are not born again; their profession is spurious and carnal, and as mere religionists, with a form of godliness but destitute of its power, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ and of the real people of God.

Nehemiah continues his narrative. "So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days." We can well imagine, though he does not inform us of it, that these three days were more than days of rest from the strenuous journey. They were days of waiting on God, renewed prayer for guidance and wisdom. He was alone with his God. When the three days of waiting were over he began a night ride to inspect the condition of the different gates and the wall. When all was quiet and people asleep, this servant of God went on this memorable night inspection, accompanied by a few men. No one knows what God had put in his heart; he kept it as a secret. There was no boast that he had come to do a big work, and no heralding of his plans. The man of faith, who trusts God, can go and act without making known what the Lord has commissioned him to do. He alone rode on an animal; the others walked. It must have been a sad journey as he passed from gate to gate in the walls. Desolation and debris everywhere. The gates were burned to ashes, and finally the rubbish in the way was so great that the animal he rode could no longer pass through. And how he must have sighed when

his eyes beheld the ruin and havoc, the results of the judgment of God on account of Israel's sin!

And how many other true servants of God have spent nights like this in considering the failure and ruin among God's people, burdened with sorrow and deep concern, sighing and groaning, with hearts touched like Nehemiah's; ready to do the Lord's will.

Verses 17–18. The rulers, the Jews, the priests and nobles were ignorant of all he had done. On the morning after that night journey, he called the people together to tell them what the Lord had put in his heart. But with what meekness and tenderness he speaks to them! He does not reproach them or charge them with unfaithfulness and neglect. He does not assume the rôle of a leader, but identifies himself with the people. "Ye see the distress that *we* are in"— he might have said, "You see the distress you are in." Then he told them of what God had done. But we find not a word of credit to himself, nor of the lonely hours spent during that sleepless night. Then the people resolved to rise up and build.

Verses 19–20. Sanballat, Tobiah and a third one, Geshem the Arabian (an Ishmaelite) were at hand with their sneers. "They laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?" They realized that Nehemiah had come to build the wall of exclusion, and bring the people back to their God-given separation; therefore these outsiders began at once to antagonize the messenger of God. Magnificent is Nehemiah's answer. "The God of heaven, He will prosper us." He puts God first. Knowing that they were doing His will in rebuilding the wall, he had the confidence and assurance that God was on their side and none could hinder. "Therefore we His servants will arise and build." This was their determination to do the work. "But ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem." It is the refusal of their fellow help. Though they might have claimed a relationship with the people of God, yet did they not belong to Israel. Their help was

not wanted. What a contrast with the unseparated condition which prevails in the professing church in what is termed "work for the Lord," in which the unsaved and ungodly are asked to participate!

CHAPTER III.

1. The Builders of the Sheep-gate (verses 1–2).
2. The Builders of the Fish-gate (verses 3–5).
3. The Repairers of the Old Gate (verses 6–12).
4. The Repairers of the Valley Gate (verse 13).
5. The Repairers of the Dung Gate (verse 14).
6. The Repairers of the Gate of the Fountain (verses 15–25).
7. The Repairers of the Water-gate (verses 26–27).
8. The Repairers of the Horse-gate (verse 28).
9. The Builders of the East-gate and the Gate Miphkad (verses 29–32).

Verses 1–2. The work is begun at once. We shall not point out the location of these different gates, nor study the topography of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah, as others have done. There are most helpful, spiritual lessons to be learned from the building of the wall and the repairing of the gates. A wall is for protection and to keep out what does not belong in the city. In Ezra's work we saw the restoration of the true place of worship. The wall surrounding the place where the people gathered once more in the true worship of Jehovah typifies the guarding of that place of privilege and blessing. A wall of separation * is needed to keep out that which is undesirable and which would hinder and mar the true worship. Even so a church, an assembly, composed of true believers who gather together in that worthy Name, and unto that Name, must be protected from the world and all which dishonors Christ, or that which is contrary to sound doctrine, must be excluded. This is the true New Testament principle in connection with the true Church, foreshadowed in the

* Even in connection with the Millennial Temple a wall is mentioned, "to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place" (Ezek. xlii:20).

building of the wall surrounding the place where the Lord had set His Name.

The third chapter is a remarkable one. We see the people of God at work building and repairing, every one doing the work in a certain place. Here is the record of the names, where and how they labored. God keeps such a record of all His servants and their labors. When all His people appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ this book will be opened "and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1 Cor. iii: 8).

Ten gates are mentioned in this chapter. In chapter viii: 16 we read of "the gate of Ephraim" and in chapter xii: 39 of "the prison gate." If we add these two to the ten mentioned in this chapter we have twelve gates (Rev. xxi: 12). The first gate at which the work started is the sheep-gate. Through this gate the sacrificial animals were led to the altar, the constant witnesses to the fact that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission" and the types of Him who was "led as a lamb to the slaughter." The sheep-gate at which the work started is typical of the blessed work of the Lamb of God, He who bore our sins in His body on the tree, the offering of His spotless, holy body by which we are sanctified. The lesson here is that the Person and Work of Christ is the starting point of a true restoration, and that the Cross of Christ, the work God's Son has accomplished, must be guarded above everything else. At the close of this chapter this sheep-gate is mentioned once more. After making the circuit of all the gates, we are led back to this first gate. It is with this great truth, the Gospel of Christ, that all repairing of the inroads of the world and the flesh, must start and terminate. This gate suggests Him who said, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John x: 9). There is no other gate which leads to life and into God's presence.

Eliashib * the highpriest, with his brethren, builded the

* Eliashib means "God will restore." True revival and restora-

sheep-gate, sanctified it and set it up. It was priestly work. The tower of Meah and the tower of Hananeel are mentioned. Meah means "a hundred" and it reminds us of the parable in which our Lord mentions the man who had a hundred sheep. Hananeel means "to whom God is gracious." Significant names. There is no doubt that this sheep-gate is the same one mentioned in John v:2, which affords still another application. The men of Jericho, once under the curse, but now in the place of nearness and blessing, toiled next to the highpriest. What grace this reveals! Zaccur ("well remembered") the son of Imri ("the towering one") also was there.

Verses 3–5. Next was the fish-gate. This was separated from the sheep-gate by the portion of the wall which the men of Jericho and Zaccur repaired. Outside of that gate may have been a fish market, or it may have been the gate through which the fishermen passed to catch fish. It reminds us of the words of our Lord, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mark i:17). After we have passed through the sheep-gate we must go through the fish-gate, to catch fish, to be soul-winners. In this way, leading others to Christ, bringing sinners to a knowledge of the Saviour, the Church is built up. Hassenaah ("lifted up") was the builder there. Then Meremoth ("Strong"), Meshullam ("Repaying" a "friend") and Zadok ("Just") repaired next to the fish-gate. "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles did not put their necks to the work of their Lord." The Prophet Amos was a Tekoite who had prophesied many years before, a simple herdman and gatherer of sycamore figs. He was chosen of the Lord, and here other humble instruments of Tekoa, used in doing the work, are immortalized in this record. Their nobles were slackers. They had no interest in the work of their Lord. And so there are such who do not work for the

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tion will follow when to the Lord Jesus Christ is given the first place.

Lord, and in that coming day will suffer loss, though they are saved.

Verses 6–12. The next gate is the Old Gate. This gate was probably the same which elsewhere is called "the corner gate" (2 Kings xiv: 10; Jer. xxxi: 38). Jehoiada ("the Lord knows") and Meshullam repaired this gate. This gate may also remind us of Him "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," who is the cornerstone, upon whom all rests. Next repaired Melatiah, the Gibeonite, and Jadon, the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and Mizpah. The Gibeonites, on account of their deception by which they had obtained a covenant of peace with Israel in Joshua's day, had been made "hewers of wood and drawers of water." Here we behold some of them participating in the great work. Of the others we mention Rephaiah, who was a wealthy man, who did not hire a substitute, but labored with his own hands, toiling with the rest. Shallum, the son of Halohesh, was another man of power and wealth; he and his daughters repaired like the rest. What a sight it must have been when these zealous men cleared away the debris and repaired the gates, and among them the daughters of Shallum!

Verse 13. The valley gate was repaired by Hanun ("gracious") and the inhabitants of Zanoah ("broken"). The valley typifies the low place, humility. How needed this is in service for God, for "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Verse 14. The dung gate was repaired by Malchiah, and he was the ruler of Beth-haccerem ("the place of the vineyard"). This gate was used to carry out the refuse and filth from the city. This gate reminds of the exhortations that God's people must cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit "for God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thess. iv: 7).

Verses 15–25. The gate of the fountain was next to the dung gate. The fountain, ever flowing, is a blessed type of the Holy Spirit, who indwells the believer and

is in him, the well of living water springing up, like a fountain, into everlasting life (John iv: 14). It is suggestive that the fountain gate came after the dung gate. If a believer cleanses himself from that which defiles, the Spirit of God will be unhindered, filling the believer and using him as a vessel meet for the Master's use. Shallun ("recompense") the son of Colhozeh ("wholly seer") the ruler of Mizpah ("watchtower") repaired and built that gate. And these names fit in beautifully with the Spirit of God as the fountain of life and power. We cannot mention all the names * which follow. Nor do we know anything whatever of the individual history of those zealous Israelites, who reconstructed and restored the wall and gates of Jerusalem. God knows each one and has preserved their names, though unknown by the world, in His Word. Surely "the memory of the just is blessed" (Prov. x: 7) and some day they, with us and all His servants, will receive the reward.

Verses 26–27. The water-gate is mentioned and the Nethinim, who were servants and dwelt in Ophel ("the high place") are connected with this gate. This gate suggests the Word of God so frequently spoken of under the symbol of water (John iii: 5; xiii: 1–16; Eph. v: 26; Ps. cxix: 6). It is very interesting to notice that while the servants are mentioned in connection with the water-gate, it does not say that they repaired that gate. The Word of God needs no building up or improving; it builds up those who bow to its blessed authority.

Verse 28. The horse-gate (2 Kings xi: 6; Jer. xxxi: 40) suggests warfare and victory. In a world of evil the people of God wage a warfare. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with the wicked spirits. Paul speaks of the believer as a soldier of Christ. Victory is on our side, though the forces of evil may threaten on all sides.

Verses 29–32. The east-gate was repaired and kept

* A good concordance like Strong's or Young's gives most of the Hebrew proper names in a reliable translation. We suggest the study of the names of those who repaired as interesting and helpful

by Shemaiah, the son of Shechaniah. From Ezekiel's prophecy we learn that the Shekina glory left from the east-gate, and that when the glory returns to dwell once more in the Temple, the great Millennial Temple of Ezekiel's vision, the glory of the Lord will enter through the east-gate. The east-gate faces the rising sun. It suggests the coming of the Lord for His people. And here the two names fit in beautifully. Shemaiah means "Heard of the Lord"; even so He will hear His people and some day will answer their prayer for His coming. Shechaniah means "Habitation of the Lord." We shall be with Him.

The Miphkad gate was repaired by Malchiah ("the Lord is King") the goldsmith's son. Miphkad means "the appointed place" or "a place of visitation." It was probably the gate in which the judges sat to settle disputes and controversies. It suggests the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Thus we learn that the wall surrounding and protecting the gathered people suggests the Cross as the starting point; Service; Christ as Lord; Humility; Cleansing from defilement; Filling with the Spirit; the Word of God and its power; Warfare and Victory; the Coming of the Lord and the Judgment Seat of Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

1. The Indignation and Sneers of the Enemies (verses 1–3).
2. Nehemiah's Ejaculatory Prayer (verses 4–6).
3. Conspiracy, and more Prayer (verses 7–9).
4. Nehemiah's Precautions and Confidence (verses 10–23).

Verses 1–3. Sanballat ("hate in disguise") having heard of the successful building of the wall, became very angry and mocked the Jews. And Tobiah the Ammonite used sarcasm. He said that which they build will be so weak that one of the foxes, which infested the broken-down walls (Ps. lxiii: 10) could break these newly built walls again.

Verses 4–6. The answer to these sneers was prayer.

The language these two enemies used was provoking, but Nehemiah's refuge is prayer. Hezekiah did the same when the Assyrian taunted him and defied the God of Israel. It is another of the brief ejaculatory prayers of Nehemiah. There are seven of them in this book — Chapter ii: 4; iv: 4–6; v: 19; vi: 14; xiii: 14, 22, 29. He prayed, "Hear, our God, for we are despised, and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity; and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee; because they have provoked thee to anger before the builders." He cast himself wholly upon God and with this prayer Nehemiah and the people put the matter in the hands of the Lord. They were an object of contempt, as His people who were doing the work of the Lord wanted to have done. Sanballat and Tobiah were the enemies of God. This prayer reminds us of the many imprecatory prayers in the psalms. When in the future another remnant of the Jews returns to the land, they will face in the great tribulation more powerful enemies than this remnant had to contend with. The man of sin, the Antichrist, will be in control, and it is then that they will pray these prayers, some of them almost like Nehemiah's prayer (Ps. cix: 14).

The work was not hindered by the taunts of the enemy. "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof, for the people had a mind to work." If only God's people are in touch with God and cast themselves wholly upon Him, all the efforts of the enemy are unavailing.

Verses 7–9. As the work progressed and the Samaritan enemies saw that their taunts were unsuccessful, they became very wroth and conspired to use force and fight against Jerusalem. Sanballat and Tobiah had gathered others, the Arabians, Ammonites and Ashdodites, to hinder the work. Behind them stood the same enemy of God, Satan, who always hinders the work of God. His work of opposition is the same in every age. A very serious time had come to the builders of the wall. The enemy was

threatening to fall upon them, and perhaps destroy what they had built. "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God." It was prayer, dependence on God, first. The next thing they did was to take precaution against the enemy —"and set a watch against them day and night, because of them." But was not prayer enough? Why the setting of a watch if they trusted the Lord? If they had not done this it would have been presumption on their part. Their action did not clash with their trust in God.

Verses 10–23. There was also discouragement in their midst. As the apostle wrote of himself, "without were fightings, within were fears" (2 Cor. vii: 5), this was true of them. They became timid and fainthearted. It was Judah, the princely tribe, whose emblem was the lion, which showed discouragement and was ready to give up in despair. But Nehemiah made no answer to the complaint "we are not able to build the wall." The best remedy was to keep right on praying, working and watching. The adversaries intended to make a surprise attack and slay the workmen and cause the work to cease. That was their plan; but they did not reckon with God, who watched over His people. Ten times the Jews which were scattered among these adversaries warned them of the great danger of the coming attack. This was another discouragement. Then Nehemiah acted in the energy of faith. He knew God was on their side and that He would fight for them. He prepared the people for the threatening conflict and armed them with swords, spears and bows. Then he addressed them with inspiring words. "Be not afraid of them: Remember the Lord, great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses." All was at stake. No mercy could be expected from the wicked adversaries. It was a blessed battle-cry he gave to them: "Remember the Lord." If He is remembered and kept before the heart defeat is impossible. The great preparation was soon reported to the enemies, by which they knew that their attack had become known. Nehemiah saw in it all God's

gracious and providential dealing, "God had brought their counsel to nought." Then he continued to work at their task of building the wall. But they did not become careless. They continued to be on their guard. "Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work and with the other hand held a weapon." A trumpeter stood at Nehemiah's side. If he sounded the alarm they were to gather together; then, said Nehemiah, "our God shall fight for us." "So we laboured in the work, and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared." We leave it with the reader to apply all this to our spiritual warfare against our enemies. The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and constant watching is needed for that.

CHAPTER V.

1. The Complaint of Oppression (verses 1–5).
2. Nehemiah's Rebuke and Demands (verses 6–13).
3. Nehemiah's Generosity (verses 14–19).

Verses 1–5. The internal conditions among the toiling people were serious. The work which was done in rebuilding the walls was a labour of love; no wages were paid. As the people were thus engaged their other occupations, including agriculture, had to be neglected. As a result the poor had been driven to mortgage their lands, vineyards and houses in order to buy corn, because of the dearth. The rich had taken advantage of this and had enslaved their sons and daughters, and there seemed to be no prospect of redeeming them. The rich Jews by usury oppressed the poor, who had lost their lands and houses. There was therefore a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. It was a sad condition; the enemy was doing his work in the camp (Acts vi: 1). Oppression of the poor is especially displeasing to God and His Spirit condemns and warns against it (Amos ii: 6; v: 12; viii: 4–8; Prov. xiv: 31; xxii: 16; xxviii: 3; and James v: 1–6).

Verses 6–13. Righteous Nehemiah, when he heard all this, was moved with indignation and righteous anger took hold on him. Nehemiah, the Governor, writes, "I consulted with myself." No doubt much prayer was connected with this self-consultation. He then rebuked the nobles and rulers for having done what the Law of God forbids and condemns (Exod. xxii:25; Lev. xxv:36–37; Deut. xxiii:19; Ps. xv:5) to exact usury. A great assembly was called in which their conduct was denounced unsparingly. "We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us?" When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem he had freed those Jews who were in bondage to the heathen on account of some debt, and these rich usurers were selling their own brethren. They had no answer to give but were convicted of their evil deeds. He then demanded full restitution, "Restore, I pray you, to them even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine and the oil, that ye exact of them." The appeal was effectual. They were at once ready to restore, to require nothing more of them, and to do all Nehemiah had demanded. It was a great victory. Had the oppression continued and the internal strife, it would have resulted in disaster. How often these internal strifes and acts of injustice have brought reproach upon the people of God, and dishonor to that worthy Name! (Gal. v:15; James iii:16.) They had to give an oath to do this, and solemnly Nehemiah shook his lap and said, "So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, who performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out and emptied." An "Amen" from the great congregation followed, and they acted upon the promise.

Verses 14–19. The closing verses show the generosity and self-denying character of this man of God. It reminds us somewhat of the Apostle Paul and his testimony concerning himself (1 Cor. iv:12; 2 Cor. xii:15–16;

1 Thess. ii:9–10). In all he had done as a servant of God he had the comfort that God knew and would be his Rewarder. "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people." He will have his reward, and so will all His people, who serve in behalf of God's people as Nehemiah did.

CHAPTER VI.

1. The Attempt to Entice Nehemiah (verses 1–4).
2. The Attempt to Intimidate Him (verses 5–9).
3. The Attempt through a False Prophet (verses 10–14).
4. The Wall Finished (verses 15–16).
5. The Conspiracy Between Jewish Nobles and Tobiah (verses 17–19).

Verses 1–4. Defeated in all previous efforts to hinder the work and to do harm to the builders of the wall, the enemies made new attempts to make them cease from the work. Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arabian, with the other enemies, had heard that the wall was about finished. Sanballat and Geshem sent the message to Nehemiah, "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono." Nehemiah knew their scheme, "they thought to do me mischief," probably to assassinate him, or make him a prisoner. He therefore answered, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" Four times they tried to entice him, and four times he gave the same answer. Apparently Sanballat and Geshem offered a friendly meeting on neutral ground, suggesting some kind of an alliance. But Nehemiah, wholehearted as he was, refused to come down and stop the important God-given work. He would not turn aside from the place given to him by the Lord and the work which he had been called to do. Maintaining this separation was his safeguard. In our own days of worldly alliance and compromise, when deceitful workers abound on all sides, who are like the Samaritans, who feared the Lord out-

wardly and served their own gods (2 Kings xvii: 33) the only way of escape is to act like Nehemiah did and have no fellowship with such.

Verses 5–9. After this failure they attempted to intimidate Nehemiah. Sanballat sent his servant the fifth time, and while the previous communications were sealed this one was in the form of an open letter. In this letter Nehemiah was slandered and a threat made to accuse him of treason to the King of Persia. Maliciousness breathed in every word of this open letter. With a clear conscience, knowing that all was a wicked invention, Nehemiah answered this new attack. "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." He recognized what they tried to do and afresh Nehemiah looked to his God. "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." As it was in Nehemiah's day so it is still. Wherever the work of the Lord is done and God's servants labor to glorify Him, the enemy will rise up and hinder the work. When the Lord opens a door, then many adversaries will appear. The sneers, the hatred, the wiles and the lies of the world are the same today, because behind them stands the same person who acted through Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem — Satan, the god of this age.

Verses 10–14. Shemaiah's message was the message of a false prophet. He told Nehemiah that they would come to slay him. He supposed that Nehemiah would flee after receiving this information in the form of a message from the Lord. But Nehemiah said, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being such as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." He was a man of faith, in fellowship with God and he at once knew that the message was not from Him. He perceived God had not sent him. Shemaiah was the hireling of the adversaries. It was a cleverly laid plan, not only to frighten Nehemiah, but to make him sin, so that they might have something against him. It seems that Shemaiah was ceremonially unclean; that is probably the meaning of "shut up." He was not fit in that condition

to be in the house of God, within the temple. And Nehemiah too, not being a priest, would have transgressed had he followed Shemaiah's suggestion. This was the cunning scheme. With this hireling prophet there were also other prophets and a prophetess, by the name of Noadiah.

Verses 15–16. "So the wall was finished in the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days." How grateful they must have been when their task was finished! Critics have remarked that fifty-two days is too short a time to accomplish such a work. But a large number of people as well as the servants of Nehemiah (v: 16) worked incessantly. The material, too, was ready, for they probably had to dig out the old stones to put them back into the right place; no new stones needed to be hewed and transported. God had worked and given His blessing. The success of it, next to God, was due to persevering prayer, personal and united effort, constant watchfulness and unfailing courage. And their enemies were more cast down, "for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."

Verses 17–19. The final paragraph of this chapter reveals another sad condition which resulted from disobedience to the Law. Mixed marriages were responsible for it. Nehemiah only reports this serious fellowship of the nobles of the Jews and his enemy Tobiah. We shall read later how Nehemiah dealt with those who had allied themselves with this Ammonite (Chapter XIII).

CHAPTER VII.

1. Provisions made for the Defense of the City (verses 1–4).
2. The Genealogy (verses 5–65).
3. Their Whole Number (verses 65–69).
4. The Gifts for the Work (verses 70–73).

Verses 1–4. The wall had been finished and the doors set up. Porters, singers and the Levites were appointed, and Nehemiah gave to his brother Hanani and Hananiah, the ruler of the castle, charge over Jerusalem. The por-

ters were gate keepers. These gate keepers are named in Ezra ii: 42, and here in this chapter in verse 45. Their duty was to open the gates and bar them at night. Nehemiah's instructions are given in the text, "Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house." The city was carefully guarded. Every one who entered the city had to do so in broad daylight, and a system of watches was established for the purpose of watching the gates of the city day and night. It seems the Hebrews before the exile, and some time after, had three night watches of four hours each. Later, at the time our Lord was on earth, they had four night watches (Mark xiii: 35). It was wisdom to guard the entrances to the city so as to keep out those who had no right to enter. As there were many enemies who might sneak in and do harm, this scrutiny and these watches were of great importance and necessity.

This caution exercised by Nehemiah in regard to watching those who entered the gates gives a lesson concerning the Church. The New Testament teaches the same caution as to those who are to be admitted to Christian fellowship, and those who are to be refused. Unregenerated persons have no right in a true church or assembly, nor any one whose life is not right, nor who holds doctrines contrary to the faith delivered unto the saints. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John, verses 10–11). But if even in the Apostolic days "certain men crept in unawares" as Jude writes (Jude, verse 4) how much greater is this evil in these Laodicean days.

Verses 5–65. This chapter corresponds to the second chapter in Ezra; the annotations given there need not be repeated here. But we notice Nehemiah's statement, "My

God put it into my heart." As a godly man, he acknowledges the hand of the Lord and His guidance.

Verses 66–69. The number of the whole congregation is given as 42,360. If we turn to Ezra ii: 64 we find the same statement. There are differences between these two lists which prove that they are not identical.

Verses 70–73. The gifts for the work are mentioned more fully by Nehemiah. See Ezra's record, chapter ii: 68–70. The amounts in both records do not agree, and it is generally charged that it is due to different traditions, or copyists' errors. But there is no real discrepancy. Ezra mentions what *some* of the chiefs of the fathers offered. Nehemiah records what he himself gave (Tirshatha is Nehemiah's Persian title as Governor) besides the chiefs and the rest of the people.

II. THE SPIRITUAL REVIVAL.

Chapters VIII–X

CHAPTER VIII.

1. The Reading of the Law before the Water-gate (verses 1–8).
2. A Day of Joy and not of Mourning (verses 9–12).
3. The Keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles (verses 13–18).

Verses 1–8. This interesting chapter gives the record of a gracious revival through the reading of the Law. All the people gathered themselves together as one man in the street that was before the water-gate, the place which suggests the cleansing and refreshing power of the Word. And as a united people they had but one desire, to hear the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded, to Israel. They gave orders to Ezra that he should bring the book of the Law. This the people knew was the Word of the Lord, and for this they hungered. Every true revival must begin with the Word, and in believing submission to what the Lord has said. So it has been in all the great revivals of the past, and so it will be in the future. The great need today is "Back to the Bible"; and to listen to its message as the message of God. How willingly and joyfully Ezra must have responded, and how it must have cheered the aged servant of the Lord! He brought the Law before the congregation both of men and women, and those that understood in hearing (children of a certain age). Critics say that Ezra's Law of Moses must not be understood as meaning the Pentateuch; they claim that it was a collection of different laws, and part of the so-called "priestly codex," which even then, according to the critical school, was not completely finished. Inasmuch as the destructive criticism denies that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch, they are obliged to resort to these arguments in order to sustain their theory.

There is no valid reason to doubt when the book of the Law of Moses was demanded and Ezra brought it before the people, that it was the Pentateuch, which the Jews call *Torah*, the Law.

Then followed under great attention the reading, from the morning until the midday. Ezra stood upon a pulpit of wood, which was a raised platform which had been made for this purpose. Alongside of Ezra were thirteen men; in all, counting in Ezra, fourteen men faced the people. They probably took turns in reading from the Law. Their names are interesting if we look at their meaning — Mattithiah (Gift of the Lord); Shema (Hearing); Anaiah (Answer of the Lord); Uriah (the Lord is Light); Hilkiah (Portion of the Lord); Maaseiah (Work of the Lord); Mishael (Who is as God is); Malchijah (King is the Lord); Hashum (Wealthy); Hashbaddanah (Esteemed by judging); Zechariah (the Lord remembers); Meshullam (Reward). These names are suggestive of the Word itself. Then Ezra unrolled the parchment seen by all the people. Great reverence was manifested to the Word by all the people standing up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Amen, Amen was the people's answer, with the lifting up of their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Ezra and the people believed that what they read is the Word of God. Hence this reverence, this praise and the attitude of submission. How little reverence for the Word of God our generation manifests! This too is a fruit of the destructive criticism, which has put the Bible on the same level with common literature. Thirteen others are mentioned who, with the Levites, caused the people to understand the Law. Some think it means that the people did not understand Hebrew, and that the Hebrew text had to be translated into Aramaic. This is probably incorrect. Hebrew was not unknown after the captivity, for Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi spoke and wrote in that language. It rather means the interpretation of what had been read, that is,

an exposition of it. The names of these thirteen expositors are also of interest. The first is Jeshua, which means "Jehovah is salvation"; this is the great truth which all Bible exposition must emphasize.

Verses 9–12. When the people heard the words of the Law they wept. They were conscience stricken on account of their individual and national sins; they judged themselves. The Word had been believed; their godly sorrow had been expressed by tears, and so they were ready for the words of comfort and cheer the Lord gave through Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites. "This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not nor weep . . . go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." And this was done. They were the Lord's people, separated unto Himself, and as they remembered all His goodness, they rejoiced in Him. Refreshed themselves, they were to remember those "for whom nothing was prepared."

Verses 13–18. The Feast of Tabernacles was kept by them. They came in reading the Law to the command of Moses that the children of Israel should "dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month." Olive, pine, myrtle and palm tree branches were to be used to construct booths in commemoration of the wilderness journey. This was done at once by them in obedience to the Word. Thus we have three facts concerning the Word in this chapter; reading the Word, believing the Word, and obeying the Word. Hence there was great gladness in keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. The words, "for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so," present a difficulty. We read in Ezra iii: 4 that the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated immediately after the arrival of Zerubbabel; nor does it seem possible that God-fearing kings in the past overlooked this feast. 1 Kings viii: 2 and 65 shows that Solomon kept this feast of the Lord. It therefore cannot mean that the

people of Israel had neglected the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles for a thousand years. The emphasis must be placed upon the word "so"— it means that never before had the Feast of Tabernacles been kept in such a manner. The reading of the Word and the revival which followed produced such a joyful and whole-hearted keeping of the feast, as had not been the case since the days of Joshua.

CHAPTER IX.

1. The Public Humiliation and Confession (verses 1–5).
2. The Great Confession and Prayer (verses 6–38).

Verses 1–5. Two days after the Feast of Tabernacles had been concluded this humiliation and confession of sin took place. The assembled congregation fasted, with sackcloth and earth upon them. Separation was next. Evil confessed must mean evil put away. They separated themselves from all strangers, and after their confession they worshipped the Lord. Here again is the right order of a spiritual revival. Reading, hearing and believing the Word always comes first; humiliation, self-judgment, confession and true worship follow.

Verses 6–38. The Levites who occupied the platform (called here stairs) called upon the people to stand up and to bless the Lord and His glorious Name. Then follows the prayer. It is the longest recorded prayer in the Bible and is much like Daniel's prayer (Dan. ix) and Ezra's prayer (Ezra ix). These three prayers deserve a careful comparison and study.

First there is a beautiful invocation and outburst of worship. "Thou art the Lord, even thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee." Here is the praise of the Creator, whose power is acknowledged, as well as the Preserver of His creation. The covenant of God with

Abraham and the seed of Abraham is next mentioned (verses 7–8) and then follows the account of the deliverance of their fathers from Egypt. He was their Redeemer (verses 9–11). The experience of the wilderness is stated in verses 12–21. The Creator-Redeemer led them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night; He spoke with them, gave them His commandments. He supplied them with bread from heaven and water from the rock. Then follows the story of their disobedience, and with what graciousness the Lord had dealt with their fathers. "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not." The possession of the land of Canaan is given in verses 22–25, revealing God's faithfulness and His power in behalf of His redeemed people. Verses 26–30 cover the period of the Judges and the Prophets. In all the mercy of God is exalted. Then comes the prayer for mercy, with the acknowledgment of their sins as a nation.

CHAPTER X.

1. Those who sealed the Covenant (verses 1–27).
2. The Obligations of the Covenant (verses 28–39).

Verses 1–27. The last verse of the preceding chapter mentions a covenant. "And yet for all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, our Levites, and our priests, seal unto it." In this chapter we find the names of the heads of the different houses who sealed the covenant, which means they put their signature to it. According to talmudical tradition these signers constituted "the Great Synagogue." Originally it consisted of 120 members, but later only 70 belonged to it. Its covenants were as follows: (1) Not to marry heathen women; (2) to keep Sabbath; (3) to keep the Sabbatical year; (4) to

pay every year a certain sum to the Temple; (5) to supply wood for the altar; (6) to pay the priestly dues; (7) to collect and to preserve the Holy Scriptures.

The list is headed by Nehemiah with his official title as Governor (Tirshatha). In verses 2–8 the priestly houses are given. The Levitical houses are recorded in verses 9–13. From the Book of Ezra we learn that only four priestly houses and only two Levites had returned under Zerubbabel. Here we have twenty-one priestly and seventeen Levitical houses. This shows a marked increase. The chiefs of the people were forty-one houses; their names are given in verses 14–27.

Verses 28–29. Besides the heads of the houses recorded in this chapter there was the rest of the people, priests, Levites (the individuals), porters, singers and the Nethinim (see Ezra ii: 43); they all had separated themselves and entered into a curse, and into an oath. The word "curse" has the meaning of an imprecatory expression in the form of an oath. There must have been some formula in connection with signing the covenant, in which the signers declared that if they broke the covenant God would do something to them (the curse) and then by a direct oath swore to keep the covenant. The obligations of the covenant are given in the rest of this chapter. These obligations may be summed up in one word, "obedience." They covenanted to obey the Law of the Lord and to do all the commandments.

III. THE PEOPLE ESTABLISHED; THE DEDICATION OF THE WALL. NEHEMIAH'S FINAL ACTS.

Chapters XI–XIII.

CHAPTER XI.

1. The Willing Offerers (verses 1–2).
2. The Heads of the Residents of Jerusalem (verses 3–24).
3. The Inhabitants outside of Jerusalem (verses 25–36).

Verses 1–2. A splendid example of self-sacrifice is given in these two verses. Certain men willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem, and the people blest them for the willing sacrifice. It must be explained that Jerusalem was not then a very desirable place for residence. The enemies of the city seeking to destroy the fortifications and harm the inhabitants were constantly active. There was much danger for those who dwelt in the city itself. For this reason the great majority of the returned captives preferred to live outside of the walls of Jerusalem. It was decided to make every tenth man to dwell in Jerusalem. The decision was made by lot. But then these volunteers came to the front and displayed self-denial and courage.

Verses 3–24. Here is another register of names recorded in God's Book, and not forgotten by Him. The children of Judah, the children of Benjamin, the priests who acted as Temple officials, the Levites, the Nethinim, and those with special callings are all named. Some day the Lord will be their Rewarder for their faithful service, as He will be the Rewarder of all His people.

Verses 25–36. Those who lived outside of Jerusalem, in villages, are tabulated in the closing verses of this chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

1. Priests and Levites at the time of the Return under Zerubbabel and Joshua (verses 1–9).
2. The Descendants of Joshua the High-priest (verses 10–11).
3. The Heads of the Priestly Houses in the time of Joiakim (verses 12–21).
4. Heads of Levitical Houses (verses 22–26).
5. The Dedication of the Walls (verses 27–43).
6. Provisions for the Priests and Levites, and other Temple officials (verses 44–47).

Verses 1–9. The names of the priests and Levites, who went up under Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua (or Joshua) the High-priest, are recorded first. Ezra, mentioned in the first verse, is not the Ezra of the Book of Ezra. According to the seventh verse these persons "were the chiefs of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua." They constituted the heads of the twenty-four courses into which the priesthood was divided (1 Chron. xxiv: 1–20). Only four heads of these courses had returned from the captivity; Jedaiah, Immer, Pasher and Harim. These were divided by Zerubbabel and Jeshua into the original twenty-four; but only twenty-two are mentioned in this record. The Abijah of verse 4 is one of the ancestors of John the Baptist (Luke i: 5).

Verses 10–11. This is the important register of the High-priests, the descendants of Jeshua, or Joshua. From now on in the history of the Jewish people chronological reckonings were no longer made by means of the reign of kings, but by the successions of the High-priests. Jaddua is unquestionably the same who is mentioned by Josephus, the Jewish historian. In his High-priestly robes he met Alexander the Great as he besieged Jerusalem, and was the means of saving Jerusalem. Alexander fell on his face when he saw Jaddua, for the great King claimed to have seen this very scene in a dream vision. Inasmuch as Jaddua was not in office till a considerable time after the death of Nehemiah, the name Jaddua must

have been added later, under the sanction of the Spirit of God, so that Jaddua's descent might be preserved.

Verses 12–26. The heads of the priestly houses in the time of Joiakim (the son of Jeshua, verse 10) are here recorded, as well as the heads of the Levitical houses. The sentence, "also the priests, in the reign of Darius the Persian" (Darius Codomannus 336–331), was probably added later, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Further comment on the recorded names is not needed.

Verses 27–43. A full and interesting account of the dedication of the walls follows the register of the names. The singers are mentioned first (verses 27–30) for it was the occasion of praise and great rejoicing. They gathered from everywhere to celebrate the dedication with singing, with cymbals, psalteries and with harps. No doubt the Psalms were used by this multitude of singers, as they gave thanks in holy song. What singing and rejoicing there will be some day when "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads" (Isa. xxxv: 10)! A great procession was made around the walls. This was the main ceremony of the dedication. The procession was in two great companies, one going to the right, and the other to the left. The one company was headed by Nehemiah, and the other probably by Ezra, the scribe. Hoshaiah (set free of the Lord) and half of the princes of Judah are mentioned first in the one company. The two companies gave thanks, no doubt responding one to the other. Perhaps they used Psalms cxlv–cxlvii. Thus singing and praising the Lord they came to the house of the Lord. Here the greatest praise was heard, by the whole company. Seven priests blew the trumpets and eight others with them. The singers' chorus swelled louder and louder, so that the joyous sound was heard even afar off. Great sacrifices were offered and everybody rejoiced. It was God by His Spirit who produced this joy, "for God had made them rejoice with great joy."

Verses 44–47. The servants of the Lord, the priests

and the Levites, were not forgotten. They brought their tithes and there was an abundant provision for all. Such were the blessed results under the spiritual revival of Nehemiah and Ezra. But when we turn to the last Book of the Old Testament, to Malachi, we learn that declension must soon have set in, for we hear there the very opposite from what is recorded here. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings" (Mal. iii:8). Therefore a curse rested then upon the nation (Mal. iii: 9–12).

CHAPTER XIII.

1. The Separation of the Mixed Multitude (verses 1–3).
2. The unholy Alliance Repudiated (verses 4–9).
3. Nehemiah's Action in behalf of the Levites and Singers (verses 10–14).
4. Provision for Sabbath Observance (verses 15–22).
5. Nehemiah's Protest (verses 23–29).
6. His own Testimony as to his Work (verses 30–31).

Verses 1–3. "On that day" does not mean the same day when the wall had been dedicated. It was a considerable time later, for we read in verse 10 that the Levites had not received their portion. It was different when the wall was dedicated. On a certain day when the Law was read again, they came to the passage in Deuteronomy xxiii:3–5, where it is written that an Ammonite and a Moabite should not enter into the assembly of God forever. Obedience followed at once, "they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude."

Verses 4–9. Here we have the first indication of declension, which in Malachi's days reached a climax. Tobiah was an Ammonite, and with Sanballat and Geshem had strenuously opposed the building of the wall (chapter vi). Eliashib the Priest, who had the oversight of the chambers of the house of the Lord, had allied himself with the enemy of Jerusalem and prepared for this man a great chamber in the Temple. There he had stored his

household goods (verse 8). Nehemiah had been absent from the city, paying a visit to the Persian court, and during his absence all this happened. It was probably right after his return from King Artaxerxes in Babylon that the Law was read that led to the separation from the mixed multitude, and this in time led to the discovery of the Priest's alliance with Tobiah. Nehemiah acted quickly, being deeply grieved. He could not tolerate such an alliance and profanation of the house of the Lord. How much greater and more obnoxious are the unholy alliances in Christendom, and the profanation of God's best.

Verses 10–14. During Nehemiah's absence the tithes had not been given, and the Levites and singers had received nothing. In consequence they left the city and the house of God was forsaken. It is possible that the people had been outraged by Eliashib's alliance with Tobiah, and had refused the tithes. Nehemiah set all things in order, and he appointed also treasurers. On his prayer in verse 14 see chapter v: 19.

Verses 15–22. Another evidence of the declension which had set in after the spiritual revival was the laxity in observing the Sabbath. Nehemiah saw some on the Sabbath day treading winepresses; others brought all kinds of burdens on the Sabbath to Jerusalem; while still others sold victuals. And men of Tyre sold fish and other wares to the people on the Sabbath. We are sure that during Nehemiah's absence the Law of God was no longer read, or they could not have fallen into this evil. All declension begins with the neglect of the Word of God. Then Nehemiah contended with the nobles. "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

Again he not only rebuked the evil, but acted energetically, and the Sabbath day was sanctified.

Verses 23–29. Alas! the flesh is flesh, and will ever be

the same. Some Jews turned back and deliberately married again women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Their offspring talked a mongrel language. Nehemiah acted in holy zeal. He cursed them, smote them and plucked off their hair. And Joiada, the son of Eliashib the High-priest, who had made an alliance with Tobiah, had married a daughter of Sanballat, the Horonite. Nehemiah refused to have anything to do with him—"I chased him from me."

Verses 30–31. The final thing we hear of Nehemiah is his testimony concerning himself and his prayer, "Remember me." In the day of Christ in glory, this great man of God will surely be rewarded for his earnest and faithful service.

ESTHER

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The Book of Esther.

Introduction.

The Book of Esther is one of the five books which the Jews call Megilloth (Rolls). They appear in the Hebrew Bible in the following order: 1. Canticles, that is Solomon's Song, read in connection with Passover. 2. Ruth, read on the feast of weeks (Pentecost). 3. Lamentation, used on the ninth Day of the month Ab, commemorating the destruction of the Temple, which happened twice on the same day, first by Nebuchadnezzar and then afterwards by the Romans. 4. Ecclesiastes, which is read during the celebration of the feast of Tabernacles. 5. The Book of Esther, read on the fast of Purim. The Jews hold this little book in the highest esteem; they call it "The Megillah" and thereby give it the place of pre-eminence among the other Megilloth. The ancient Rabbis give it a place next to the Torah, the Law. Maimonides taught that when the Messiah comes every other book of the Jewish Scriptures will pass away, but the Law and the Book of Esther will remain forever. . . . Yet many objections have been made against this book. Its rightful place in the Canon of the Old Testament has been hotly contested by Jews and Christians.

We mention the two leading objections. The first objection is that the Name of God does not appear in this book. Some ancient teachers have tried to overcome this objection by the theory that the name Jehovah is found a number of times in the initial letters of certain sentences, which letters spell the sacred name. Jehring, Bullinger and others have adopted this attempt to vindicate the book. But this is at best only a fanciful endeavour to do away with this objection. We believe the Holy Spirit is the author of the Book of Esther and has given in it a correct report of this remarkable episode in Jewish history. He does not conceal things and to use initial letters of certain words to produce another word is an extremely unsafe method of Bible study. The Spirit of God had a valid reason why He omitted the name of God, which we state later.

Some have suggested that inasmuch as Esther was to be used in connection with the feast of Purim (a feast of merry-making) the name of the Lord was omitted on purpose to avoid its irreverent use amid the scenes of feasting and drinking. Professor Cassel in his lengthy commentary on Esther states that the omission of the name of God was an act of prudence and caution from the side of the person who wrote this account. Others claim that the report was taken

mostly from Persian records, which would explain the absence of the name.

It is true the name of God is absent, but God is nevertheless present in this little book. We find Him revealed on every page, in His providence, in His overruling power, in the preservation and deliverance of His covenant people. God cared for His people and watched over them, though they were unfaithful to Him. He frustrated the plan of the enemy. It is true they did not call on Him, but nevertheless His sovereignty in grace is displayed towards them. God's government is therefore revealed in this book though His Name is unmentioned.

The second objection is that the canonicity of the book should be rejected because it is not quoted in the New Testament. But this objection also breaks down when we remember that seven other Old Testament books are unquoted in the New Testament Scriptures. Destructive Criticism has made other objections of a minor character; we do not need to mention these. Amongst those who had no use for this book is found Martin Luther, who went so far as to say that he wished the book might not exist at all. The evidence that the book is true, with its remarkable story of the great deliverance of a part of God's people, is found by the celebration of the feast of Purim by the Jews. If such a thing as the Book of Esther records had not occurred then the Purim feast could not be explained.

The *Author of the Book of Esther* is unknown. Some think of Mordecai, others mention Ezra and Nehemiah as possible authors; but this is only guesswork. It is certain that one person wrote the entire account with the exception of chapter ix:20–32, which probably was added by another hand. The style is extremely simple; the Hebrew used is much like that of Ezra and Nehemiah. It contains some Persian words.

The purpose of the Book of Esther has admirably been stated by Prof. Cassel in: "It is a memoir written by a Jew to all his people who are scattered in the extensive countries of Persia, in which are recorded the wonderful interpositions of Providence in their deliverance from destruction, which appeared to be certain. It has no other purpose but to narrate this; it is not called upon to give information about other matters; albeit it gives a picture of Persian Court life, the like of which is found nowhere else."

It brings out the great fact that the Jewish people out of their own land, and no longer in any outward relation to God, are nevertheless the objects of His gracious care. This broken relationship seems to be reason why the name of God is avoided in the book. In spite of their unfaithfulness they are still His people, for God's gifts and calling are without repentance. He covers them with His protecting hand and watches over them and in His own way and His own time acts in their behalf, delivering them from their enemies.

Significant it is that the history in the Book of Esther concludes the historical books of the Old Testament. The conditions described therein continue during the times of the Gentiles till finally the great deliverance comes for the people Israel. Jewish expositors have compared Esther to the dawn of the morning, that it is like the dawn which announces the end of the night.

It is a prophetic forecast of their history and is especially typical of the coming days of Jacob's trouble when they shall be delivered.

The typical-dispensational application is of much interest, for it illustrates some of the prophecies in a practical way. Vashti, the Gentile wife, may be looked upon as Christendom, to be set aside for her disobedience, and Esther, the Jewess, takes her place. This reminds us of the parable of the two olive trees in Romans xi and the final execution of the Divine threat that the grafted in branches, Gentile Christendom, are to be cut off and the broken off branches, Israel, put back upon their own olive tree.

Haman, the wicked enemy of the Jews, a descendant of Agag, the first enemy Israel met in the wilderness, is an illustration of the future enemy Israel will face. He is called "Haman the wicked" (chapter vii:6). The numerical value of the Hebrew letters composing the words "Haman the Wicked" is exactly 666.

Mordecai is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in His coming glorious exaltation. The complete triumph of the Jews over their enemies, the joy and peace, recorded at the close of this book, are typical of the time when Christ reigns on earth. We give at the close of each chapter hints on the typical and dispensational application which can be made of this history.

Analysis and Annotations.

THE BANQUETS AND QUEEN VASHTI DISOWNED.

CHAPTER I.

1. The First Feast of the King (verses 1–4).
2. The King's Feast unto all the People (verses 5–8).
3. The Queen's Feast for the women (verse 9).
4. The Queen's Refusal to appear at the King's Feast (verses 10–12).
5. The Queen put away (verses 13–22).

Verses 1–4. King Ahasuerus, one of the leading characters of this book, is known in history as Xerxes I. The name Ahasuerus is an appellative, which means the chief king, or the king of all kings. Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspes, bore this title, King of kings. This title is also given to him in the cuneiform inscriptions. One of these reads as follows: "I, the mighty king, king of kings, king of populous countries, king of this great and mighty earth, far and near." His dominion extended from East to West, even from India unto Ethiopia. He had a universal kingdom. The capital of his empire was Shushan, which had a beautiful situation surrounded by high mountains, traversed by streams and abounding in a luxurious vegetation. Since the time of King Darius it became the residence of the Persian kings. The word "palace" is better translated by fortress or castle. And in the third year of his reign he made the great feast unto all his princes, and his servants, and all the nobles of Persia and Media were before him. He then showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and entertained the nobles and princes for six months.

Verses 5–8. This sumptuous feast was followed by a second banquet to which all the inhabitants of the capital

were invited. It was held in the garden of the palace and lasted for seven days. The decorations were in white, green, blue, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to rings of silver and pillars of marble. Upon a pavement of red, white, blue and black marble (a mosaic floor) stood the couches of gold and silver. The royal wine was served out of vessels of gold not two of which were alike. The King displayed his enormous wealth and his abundant possessions. "And the wine of the kingdom was in abundance, according to the bounty of the King." And there was perfect freedom; each could drink to his heart's content. The King had instructed the officers "that they should do according to every man's pleasure."

Verse 9. Queen Vashti (Vashti means "beautiful woman") is now introduced. She made a separate feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to her husband, the King. Such feasts were frequently given by royal women of the East. Nothing is said how long her feast lasted.

Verses 10–12. The King's heart being merry with wine, he commanded his seven chamberlains to bring Vashti in her royal apparel to the feast, so that the peoples and the princes could admire her great beauty. The seven chamberlains were eunuchs who held important offices. Mehuman was the chief officer; Biztha, according to the meaning of his name, the treasurer; Harbona, the chief of the bodyguard; Bigath, who had charge over the female apartments; Abagtha, the chief baker; Zethar, the chief butler, and Carcas, the chief commander of the castle. These dignitaries were sent to accompany the Queen to the feast of Ahasuerus. She refused to obey the King's command. Her refusal has been differently interpreted. According to Persian custom the Persian King held all for slaves except the legitimate wife. Was it in defiance of the King's order or out of self respect? She may have refused to show that she could not be dictated to by a drunken husband and that she was unwilling to show herself in the midst of revelry. Perhaps she did not care to

come because she had a feast of her own. Then the king became extremely angry.

Verses 13–22. At once the wise men were called, the astrologers, the magi and sorcerers (Dan. ii:2). His privy council consisted of seven princes, the princes of Persia and Media, who were next to the King, sat with him and the wise men to take up this serious matter. The question is, "What shall we do unto the Queen Vashti according to law, because she has not done the bidding of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?" The case is thus turned over by the King into the hands of the wise men and the seven princes. These decide that Vashti has wronged the King and furthermore by her refusal had set a dangerous example to all the subjects of the King. Much contempt and wrath would follow throughout the empire. They advise that Vashti is to lose her royal estate, that she be put away. The King sanctions it and issued at the same time a decree to be published throughout his great kingdom that all wives should honor their husbands. The Persian kings were great autocrats and ruled with an iron hand. Their laws were irrevocable. "It is certainly no fable which is told of Xerxes, viz., that when the inundation of the Hellespont had destroyed all bridges, he gave order that it should be beaten with rods for disobedience (Herodotus vii:35). But it was more easy for him to beat the sea than to obtain that which his edict demanded."

The letters were dispatched by the excellent postal service, which according to the historian Herodotus, Persia possessed. Memucan had brought about the downfall of the Queen; she disappears completely. Jewish tradition gives several reasons why Memucan was so hostile to Vashti. One is that his own wife had not been invited to Vashti's feast and another, because he wanted his own daughter promoted and become the Queen.

TYPICAL APPLICATION.

The Persian king claimed the title King of Kings, which belongs only to the Lord Himself. The great feast which

he made reminds us of another feast which the Lord has spread. Ahasuerus' feast was on the third year of his reign and appointed to show the riches of his kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty. The Gospel feast to which God invites, is prepared in His Son, who died and was raised on the *third day*, and this feast shows forth exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us. And those who accept become partakers of the heavenly calling, nobles and princes, who shall reign with Him in His coming kingdom. The invitation is "Come for all things are now ready." There is enough for all; enough to fill to overflowing. The wine is the symbol of joy; it cheereth God and man (Judges ix: 13). As the King had his joy with his subjects in this earthly feast, so God rejoices in those who come to the table of His Love, and those who accept His invitation rejoice in Him. The couches of gold and silver at the King's feast were for rest. Gold and silver are symbolical of righteousness and redemption, and these are the couches, the resting places for the believer. And as Ahasuerus invited all to come to his feast, with no other conditions, but to come, so God wants all men to be saved and offers the riches of His grace without money and without price. While the Persian king displayed the glories of his great kingdom, God displays the glory of His Grace.

In Vashti we see a type of the refusal of the invitation. She had been invited to come and grace the feast with her presence, she would not come. It reminds us of the parable of our Lord, in which He speaks of the great supper, a symbol of the Gospel, and the bidden guests who made excuses for not coming. She had her own feast, which she probably would not leave. How many there are who refuse the Gospel invitation because they love their own things best. And Vashti is banished. She is put away. And this is the sinner's fate who refuses to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Vashti too may be taken as a type of professing Christendom, those who have the form of godliness and

deny the power thereof, whose god is their belly and who are the enemies of the Cross, disobedient to God. Some day Christendom will be disowned by the Lord; He will spew Laodicea out of His mouth. Then the King of Kings will call another to take the place of apostate Christendom.

ESTHER CHOSEN QUEEN. MORDECAI'S DISCOVERY.

CHAPTER II.

1. The Suggestion (verses 1–4).
2. Mordecai and Esther introduced (verses 5–7).
3. Esther brought to the King's house (verses 8–11).
4. Esther chosen as Queen (verses 12–18).
5. Mordecai's Discovery and exposure of the plot (verses 19–23).

Verses 1–4. This probably did not happen immediately after the feast. We learn this from verse 16 in this chapter. He took Esther in the place of Vashti in the seventh year of his reign, but the feast described in the opening chapter happened in the third year. About four years elapsed. During these years, profane history tells us, Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), undertook a campaign against Greece with which many misfortunes were connected. He must have returned exhausted and unhappy. Then his conscience spoke. He probably missed the companionship of Vashti and he remembered her and what was decreed against her. But why did the monarch not take Vashti back into favor and forgive her, if remorse troubled him? As nothing more is said of Vashti it is more than probable that she was put to death. Perhaps the unfortunate war, the great losses he had sustained, were looked upon by the King as being the punishment for his drunken wrath against the Queen. Then the courtiers made their suggestions which is in fullest keeping with the customs of Persia and still practised by oriental sultans and shahs.

Fair young virgins are to be brought to the Harem, the house of the women, under the custody of Hegai, the King's chamberlain and keeper of the women. The King was well pleased with this suggestion.

"One cannot but admire the simple, quiet historical style of our narrative. Laying aside all the reports which only would prolong our way of coming to the essential part of the contents of the book, there is nothing omitted which would contribute to the historical and psychological introduction and illustration. How much is necessary to happen before Israel could have ready help in time of need! What great things, according to the external appearance, must precede, in order to make it possible that a Jewish girl by the influence of her charms ascend the throne of the Persian Empire! The great conference of all the officers of the state, the dreadful war with Greece, and the unfortunate issue of the same, were they not in the hands of Providence so many stepping stones in the path of Esther's ascendancy? In order to replace the loss of Vashti, a woman of equal endowments must be sought for the King, wherever and however it might be! How many things must subserve to the frustration of Haman's wicked plan! The wrath of Xerxes against Greece, and his wrath against his wife. Court intrigues against the powerful influences of a wife, and the vain conceit of offended sovereignty? First drunkenness, then homicidal passion, then new excited sensuality, were the sad instruments which preceded Israel's redemption."

"When the people were delivered, they could well be penitent when they considered the way in which Vashti — though not herself guiltless — was one of the main causes of their deliverance. And if deep penitence must have resulted from the reflection that a woman like Vashti had to die a violent death in order that the people of God should live,— what kind of penitence must the thought call forth when we remember that Christ gave His Life in order that Israel and the Gentiles might live." *

* Professor P. Cassel.

Verses 5–7. These verses introduce us now to the leading actors in this book. Mordecai, the Jew, was the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives which had been carried away with Jechoniah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

Here we face one of the inconsistencies charged by higher criticism. But their mistake is quite apparent. They claim that Mordecai belonged to the captives carried away by Nebuchadnezzar. Then they say, that being the case Mordecai must have been over 130 years old and Esther at least 70 years. But does it say that Mordecai was carried away at the time of King Jechoniah? It was not Mordecai who was carried away but his great-grandfather Kish. "The clear and instructive intentions of the historian in this genealogical passage are evident. He points out, through the enumeration of the four generations from Kish to Mordecai, the time which elapsed since the banishment of Jechoniah, which took place before the destruction of the temple. The period of about 120 or more years which since then elapsed to the sixth year of Xerxes are exactly expressed by the four generations. We have also some intimation concerning the period of the narrative, which is assigned to the reign of Xerxes I. That Kish was a Benjamite, is only told for the purpose of distinguishing him from other men with the same name who belonged to the tribe of Levi. One might have thought it impossible that Biblical expositors should commit the mistake of making the information concerning the exile of Jechoniah refer to Mordecai himself — an idea for which there is neither textual nor historical foundation, but rather both against it." * Mordecai had brought up Hadassah. She was an orphan, fair of form and good of countenance, his uncle's daughter. Mordecai had adopted her. Hadassah means "myrtle" and Esther "star." Critics have identified the name Esther with

* Professor Cassel.

the Babylonian goddess Isthar (similar to Ashtoreth), and they also claim that Hadassah was the Babylonian title for the same goddess. But such statements are mere inventions.

Verses 8–11. Esther on account of her great beauty was taken with the many other virgins in obedience to the King's command. Jewish tradition informs us that Mordecai, her guardian and second father, had kept her concealed, in order not to be obliged to deliver her to the royal agents, but people who knew her, and who had not seen her for some time drew the attention of the agents to the concealment. She with the others is placed in charge of Hegai the keeper of women. In all we see the hand of the Lord preparing step by step the help needed for the preservation and deliverance of His people during the approaching crisis. And Esther pleased Hegai; he showed her kindness. This kindness was expressed in furnishing her the means of improving her appearance, such as cosmetics and perfumes, according to Oriental customs. Then she received no doubt beautiful garments and jewelry to enhance her person still more. Then the best place in the house of the women was given to her and the seven maids who waited on her.*

And Esther had not showed her people and her kindred. This was done on the advice of Mordecai. This has been characterized as deception, extraordinary adroit-

* Very interesting and curious is the Jewish tradition concerning these seven servants. This tradition as preserved in the Targumim makes their names to correspond with the work of the six days of creation. Thus the fourth maid-servant's name was "Starlight" because on the fourth day the heavenly bodies came into view. Remarkable is the name of the maid who attended her on the sixth day — Friday; her name was "Lamb." On the seventh day, the Sabbath, the servant's name, who waited on her was "Rest": she reminded Esther of the Sabbath. And the Servant who attended her after the day after the Sabbath (our Lord's day) bore the name of the mystical bird Phoenix, the symbol of light, rising out of the fire and out of death. It is certainly interesting, to say the least, to find such traditional statements.

ness, and cowardice. It was neither. Divine Providence ordered it thus. Inasmuch as Esther's parents were dead such concealment of nationality was not difficult; had her parents lived it would have been next to impossible. Had it been known that she belonged to the alien race, intrigues for her destruction would have soon been set afoot. Haman's wicked endeavour may even then have been in process of planning. Mordecai walking daily before the court of the women's house, proves his great concern for his adopted daughter.

Verses 12–18. The description of verses 12–14 is a perfect picture of Persian customs and the licentiousness of Persian and other Oriental rulers. In due time Esther's turn came to be presented to the King. "She required nothing." Professor Cassel in his exposition gives the best exposition of this statement.— The other women could not find enough artificial means with which to make an impression upon the King. But Esther cared nothing about these things. She had no such ambitious desires. Her heart did not burn to become something illustrious, yet unbecoming to a Jewess. Reluctantly she must have left her home, and reluctantly she must have put on the ornaments. She was wanted, and was ordered to appear, and therefore she obeyed Hegai and allowed herself to be prepared for the occasion. She was compelled to be there, while no doubt in her heart she detested the whole affair.

She was brought in to the King. Attracted by her beauty he set the royal crown upon her head and the Jewish maiden became Queen in place of Vashti. This took place in the month Tebeth in the seventh year of the reign of Ahasuerus.

Then a great feast was made, even Esther's feast, a release was made, probably a release of prisoners and taxes and gifts were bestowed. God in His providence.

Verses 19–23. This paragraph contains another important providential event which in the subsequent history plays a very leading part. The opening words of verse

19 have been pronounced obscure by critics. "And when the virgins were gathered together the second time." Jewish expositors have explained this as meaning a conspiracy, that the enemies of the new Queen had collected more virgins so that in some way Esther might be eclipsed and placed into the background. It is claimed by others that the words "the second time" should be omitted from the text as there is some doubt about them. If this is done the statement would then refer to the gathering of the virgins mentioned in the eighth verse of the chapter. But the suggestion that the second gathering was an act of conspiracy might be the true meaning; it would show the purpose of the unseen enemy and it also explains the watchfulness of Mordecai. He sat at the King's gate. It was according to oriental custom a place of public resort, where news was heard and conversation with friends and others were carried on. The suggestion by some that Mordecai sat in the King's gate because he was an official of the government must be dismissed as incorrect.

Verse 20 informs us of two interesting facts. Esther did not disclose her nationality and she continued in humble obedience to her foster father as if she were still under his roof and not the great Queen. The royal glory and dignity which surrounded her on all sides had not affected her in the least. She had not forgotten that the whole royalty was not a matter of pleasure to her, but only an act of obedience, the providential purpose of which she then did not know, but which she found out afterward. Her interest was with Mordecai outside and not with the royal splendour inside.

Let us note the providential leading in all this. If Esther had revealed her connection, if it had become known that Mordecai at the gate was her uncle and she his adopted daughter, he would not have remained in the obscure position before the gate. Then the conspirators would have been cautious and not spoken within the hearing of such a person so closely related to the Queen. The knowledge of the planned attempt upon the life of

the King Mordecai owed to the fact that nobody knew who he was and therefore paid no attention to him.

The Conspirators were Bigthan and Teresh. They sought to lay hands on the King. According to Jewish tradition they intended to put a venomous reptile in the King's cup when he was about to drink.* The plot was overheard by Mordecai who at once communicated the fact to Esther and she told the King of it in the name of Mordecai. She did so guided by the divine hand, which is so evident in this remarkable history. The plot is at once investigated and the report is found true. The conspirators were hanged and the event is historically recorded in the Book of the Chronicles.

Esther had saved the King's life by giving him the report of Mordecai. And Mordecai received no reward. His faithfulness was evidently forgotten; but God had ordered it all.

TYPICAL APPLICATION.

Dispensationally Esther typifies the Jewish remnant, which will be called by the King of Israel, our Lord, when Gentile-Christendom has been disowned and set aside for its unfaithfulness, as Vashti was set aside. The parable of the good and the wild Olive-tree in Romans xi is thus illustrated by Vashti and Esther. The branches of the wild olive tree — professing Christendom (but not the true church) which were grafted in upon the root of the good Olive-tree (Israel and the Abrahamic covenant) on account of their failure will be cut out and cast aside. The broken off branches (the remnant of Israel) will be put back upon the root of the good Olive tree.† This remnant will then be brought into definite relationship

* King Ahasverus, Xerxes, lost his life by assassination in 465 B. C. Artaban, the commander of his cavalry, conspired with Mithridates, his confidential chamberlain, who admitted him into the King's bedroom, and Artaban stabbed him to death while he slept.

† See Annotations on Romans xi or for a fuller exposition read "The Jewish Question," an exposition of Romans xi by A. C. G.

with the Lord, pass through the period of the great tribulation, foreshadowed in Haman's wicked plot, and then receive the kingdom, be delivered and have part in the kingdom, as it was the case with Esther, Mordecai and the Jews at Shushan.

The Gospel application is also of interest. The humble Jewish girl is raised to the place of a Queen, to the place beside the King. She did not seek that place. It never entered into her mind to receive such a place. She was sought for. All this illustrates the Gospel by which the beggar upon the dunghill is raised to sit amongst princes and to inherit the throne of Glory (I Samuel ii). She, who was a foreigner, becomes married to the King, to share his glory, his riches and his honors. And so the believing sinner becomes one Spirit with the Lord, a member of His body " flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones," to share His eternal glory and His eternal riches.

HAMAN AND HIS WICKED PLOT.

CHAPTER III.

1. The Promotion of Haman and Mordecai's Faithfulness (verses 1–6).
2. Haman's Proposal and the King's Assent (verses 7–11).
3. The Proclamation of Death (verses 12–15).

Verses 1–6. How long after these things the history of this chapter came to pass is not definitely stated. It probably happened after a short interval. We are now introduced to Haman the Son of Hammedatha the Agagite. Him the King promoted and set his seat above all the princes. The tracing of this man's name is of interest. Its meaning is " A magnificent one." Philologists derive it from the Persian god Haoma or Hom, who was thought to be a spirit, possessing life-giving power. There can be no doubt that his name has a religious sentiment connected with and his activity shows zeal in religious things. What interests us the most is that he was a descendant

of Agag, the king of Amalek (I Sam. xv:8) who descended from Esau, Jacob's brother and enemy. Amalek is always the bitter enemy of Israel. His final overthrow will come with the Second Coming of Christ. Thus Balaam announced in his prophetic utterance. When the sceptre at last rises out of Israel to smite the nations, then Amalek will find his end. "And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish forever." (Numbers xxiv: 17–20.) This Haman, the Amalekite, is later called "the Jew's Enemy" (verse 10). He foreshadows that final enemy, who arises to trouble Israel and attempts their extermination before the King of Israel appears. The dispensational and typical applications at the close of this chapter deal more fully with this interesting character.

And all the King's servants bowed down and did him reverence. They paid to him the honor of a god. Nearly all these Oriental rulers claimed divinity. Artaban is saying to Themistocles, according to Plutarch "The important thing with us Persians is that a king is worshipped and looked upon as the very image of God." As the King's representative this worship was extended to Haman. But Mordecai did not bow down because such reverence involved the recognition of a false god and was against the commandment of God. Mordecai may have remembered Isaiah's great prediction "To Me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear." According to Jewish tradition Haman wore on his coat the image of an idol and that this was the reason why Mordecai refused. The King's servants warned Mordecai and when this was not heeded they told Haman. What a noble figure! In the midst of the worshipping servants bowing deep before Haman stands erect Mordecai, the Jew. He manifested faith in God. He trusted in Him who had delivered Daniel's companion out of the fiery furnace, when they refused to worship the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. He trusted the same God who had

stopped the lions' mouths when Daniel would not pay divine honors to Darius, the Persian king.

And when Haman discovers that Mordecai was a Jew and that his refusal was not wilful disobedience but inspired by faith in God, in obedience to His Law, the Amalekite hate is stirred up in his wicked heart, and he became full of wrath. An unseen Being, he who is the murderer from the beginning, told him to make this the occasion for destroying all the Jews in the Persian Empire.

Verses 7–11. And now Haman waits on his unseen master, the devil. They cast the lot before Haman, from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. He wanted to find out the month which would be best suited for the execution of his wicked plot. Soothsaying, familiar spirits, asking the dead, divining by the flight of birds or by the liver of a slain animal, prognostigators and astrologers, flourished among the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians and all other pagan nations. Behind it all is the Devil and his fallen angels. And these things are still practised, not alone in China and India, but in the very midst of professing Christendom. Spiritism, the worst form of demonism, is ever on the increase. Astrology, asking the dead, consulting demons, casting the lot, getting messages through the so-called "Ouija Board" (in use in China, the land of demon possessions, for over 2000 years) is made use of today by countless thousands among the supposedly "christian nations." We see what kind of progress the world has made. The same superstitions, the same evils morally and in religious matters, the same demon powers whose fellowship the greater part of the race invites, as 3000 and more years ago.

Through the lot he imagines that the twelfth month, the Jewish month Adar, is the month to execute the plot. Jewish tradition explains this in the following way: "When he came to make observations in the month Adar, which comes under the zodiacal sign of the fish, Haman

exclaimed — Now they will be caught by me like the fish of the sea. But he did not notice that the children of Joseph are compared in the Scripture to the fish of the sea, as it is written: And let them multiply as the fish in the midst of the earth" (Genesis xlviii: 16; marginal reading).

And now he approacheth the King who was ignorant of Haman's dark counsel. He tells the King of a certain people which inhabit his kingdom. He avoids mentioning their names. If he had the plot would not have succeeded for Xerxes must have been well acquainted with the illustrious history of the Jews and he knew that ever since Cyrus the policy of the Persian Empire had been the protection of the Jews. Haman's accusation is twofold. First: Their laws are diverse from those of every people. Second: Neither keep they the King's laws. And then the verdict: It is not for the King's profit to suffer them. They were a separate people, following their God-given law. It was this religious side which stirred up the hatred of Satan and through Haman he urges now the wholesale murder of the race. And Haman like his dark master, Satan, was cunning enough to anticipate an objection from the side of the King. Would not his kingdom suffer financially if a whole people is wiped out? To remove this financial consideration he offers to pay 10,000 talents of silver for the desired slaughter of the Jews. (About 20 million dollars.) With it he tempted the avarice of the King and at the same time tickled his pride by implying that it must be a trifle to him to lose a whole people who were only worth the price of 10,000 talents. And Haman probably speculated that this great sum he offered, the greater the sum was the more flattering it would appear to the fancy of the King to waive it. Oriental monarchs were known for doing such things in a boastful spirit. This Haman knew well.

Then the King gave him his ring. It was a ring to seal a document. Every ring had a seal. The transfer of the royal ring with the royal seal denoted the transfer of

kingly authority and power to the recipient. Haman was therefore invested with royal authority. The haughtiness of the King appears now. Not alone does he turn over his signet-ring but he also makes Haman a present of the enormous sum he had offered to the King. In cold blood Xerxes gives over the, to him unknown people, into the hands of this wicked enemy.

Verses 12–15. A great activity is here described. An Empire-wide proclamation, a veritable proclamation of death was issued. The King's scribes were called on the 13th day of the month. Research has established the fact that the 13th day of the month was called by the Persians Tir (the meaning of which is "lot"). All the King's satraps, the governors of every province, the princes of every people who had become identified with the Persian empire were notified in different languages of what should take place on the 13th day of the month Adar. The proclamation was written in the name of the King and sealed with his ring in Haman's possession. "And letters were sent by posts into all the King's provinces, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey." And this horrible decree was sent haste throughout the land. The King and Haman sat down to a banquet, while the capital, Shushan, was perplexed and deeply stirred.

TYPICAL APPLICATION.

Haman illustrates the coming man of sin, the Beast of Revelation XIII. As remarked in the introduction, his title "Haman the Wicked" (vii:6) represents in the numerical value of the Hebrew letters which compose this title the number 666. (See Revelation xiii:18.) This future coming one will be like Haman the enemy of the Jews and one of Satan's masterpieces. Haman was to be worshipped and revered. And the man of sin will demand

divine worship and with the help of the first Beast, the little horn of Daniel vii, he seeks to exterminate the Jews. He will manifest greater cunning than Haman and use the political power to accomplish his purpose. Mordecai in his refusal is a type of the refusal of the godly Jewish remnant to worship the man of sin.

The proclamation of death pronounced upon a whole race of people, everyone doomed to death, none exempted, typifies the condition in which the whole race is spiritually. The Law on account of sin is such a proclamation. The soul that sinneth shall die. The wages of sin is death. The helpless condition in which the death doomed Jews found themselves is a picture of the helpless condition of man as a sinner. Nothing the Jews did could save them; no weeping nor pleading could change things. All this may be enlarged upon and helpfully applied to man's condition as a sinner.

THE CONSTERNATION OF THE JEWS. MORDECAI AND ESTHER.

CHAPTER IV.

1. The great Lamentations of the Jews (verses 1–3).
2. Esther's Discovery (verses 4–9).
3. Esther's Helplessness (verses 10–12).
4. Mordecai's Answer (verses 13–14).
5. Esther's Decision (verses 15–17).

Verses 1–3. When Mordecai heard of what had been done and the plan to exterminate his people became known to him he rent his clothes. This and the putting on of sackcloth and ashes were the outward expressions of the most intense grief. The sackcloth was a coarse haircloth of a black color. Then his bitter cry and wailing was heard in the midst of the city. Because of the sackcloth, which was also used as a sign of mourning over the dead among the Persians, it was regarded as unclean, and inasmuch as the palace of the King was looked upon

as a clean and holy place, Mordecai could not enter the King's gate. He had to stand outside the wall. And throughout the provinces as the proclamation became known and was read by the condemned race, there was the same weeping and wailing with fasting. Prayer unquestionably was also connected with this grief.

Verses 4–9. Esther in the secluded portion of the palace knew nothing of the great edict which had gone forth. Her maids and chamberlains, whom she may have used to keep in touch with her uncle, then informed her that Mordecai was missing inside of the gate and that he was sitting outside in a most pitiable condition, weeping and wailing. How this report must have shocked Esther! She was exceedingly grieved and then sent raiment to Mordecai. This was according to Persian custom in connection with mourning over the dead that the nearest relations should send the mourner new garments, to put these on instead of the sackcloth. The Jews must have conformed to some of these customs. Esther thought that some one of the family of Mordecai had died. But Mordecai refused the garments for he was not mourning over death. This must have mystified Esther still more. She therefore sent Hathach, one of the King's chamberlains, her personal attendant, to Mordecai to find out the cause of his mourning.

And Hathach went forth. Mordecai told him of Haman's plot. As he possessed a copy of the decree he gave it to Hathach to deliver to Esther and then Mordecai's message to Esther. "To charge her that she should go in unto the King, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him, for her people." He did not say "for this people" but "for her people." This made known to Hathach Esther's Jewish origin. Mordecai knew the great favor Esther had found before the King and he hoped that her supplication would avert the doom of the race. There is nothing said of Mordecai calling upon God, no record of his supplications to the God of Abraham. Undoubtedly he did call on Him. This is

in accord with the character of the people; they are seen as out of the land and out of touch with the Lord. Yet Jehovah in unchanging mercy watcheth over them. And Hathach delivered the message.

Verses 10–12. Esther sent the answer. Mordecai heard the alarming news that the King was unapproachable. Esther herself had not seen his face for a whole month. To enter the King's presence unbidden would mean sure death. Death to all "except such to whom the King shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live." Esther thus informed Mordecai that she is subject to the same law, and if she transgresseth it, no exception would be made, though she be the Queen.

Verses 13–14. Mordecai's answer to Esther is a sublime one. It would have been quite natural for Mordecai to say "If thou canst not save all the people, at least save me, and the house of thy father, for thou belongest to the unassailable house of the King." He does not think of his personal interest and safety; it is the salvation of his people which is upon his heart. He knows that Esther is in a position not only to be saved herself, but also to save her people. He gives her to understand if she does not act now and if she holds her peace deliverance for the Jews would be granted through another source. She would lose a great opportunity and she and her father's house would perish. In these words Mordecai expressed his deep conviction that the Jewish people cannot perish. He knew the history of the past and trusted in God that He would find a way out at this time also. And he believed more than this, that Providence had put her on the throne just to effect the deliverance—"Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

"The answer of Mordecai is a masterpiece of eloquence. He who loved and cherished Esther as a daughter, seeks now that she should risk her life for the deliverance of Israel. He wills it, because he believes in the deliverance; because he draws from the history of Israel the assurance

that as a race they cannot become extinct, and because he sees in the exaltation of Esther the divine purpose to use her in the deliverance. He encourages her to act and to risk her life and this he did by stimulating her faith in an overruling providence and that therefore she had nothing to fear."

Verses 15–17. She responded to this eloquent appeal; her believing heart had laid hold on the suggestion of her uncle. The Jews are to be gathered together in Shushan, she requests, for three days and three nights, neither to eat nor to drink. She would do the same with her maidens. "And so will I go in unto the King, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish."

Fasting in the Old Testament is always the symbolic form of prayer; it cannot be disassociated from prayer. In giving this command she expressed her dependence on God and put Him first before attempting to go in to the King. And then her noble word — If I perish, I perish. Her faith measured up to Mordecai's expectation. She is ready to sacrifice herself in order to save her people. How it reminds us of Him who did more than say, "If I perish, I perish," who gave Himself and took upon Himself the curse of the law. And Mordecai did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

TYPICAL APPLICATION.

In the weeping, and wailing of Mordecai and the Jews, the rent clothes, the sackcloth and the ashes, we have a prophetic foreshadowing of the earnest turning to God of the Jewish remnant during the end of this age. How vividly Joel speaks of this in the name of Jehovah. "Therefore also now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping, and with mourning, etc." (Joel ii: 12). And then comes for them the final deliverance as revealed by Joel and foreshadowed in the deliverance of the Book of Esther. Mordecai's faith and Esther's noble decision are equally typical of the trust and confidence of that godly portion

of the Jewish people who will pass through the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah xxx: 4) and who will be delivered out of it.

As we pointed out in the previous chapter, the great proclamation typifies what God has said as to the race of sinners, that the wages of sin is death. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The whole race is therefore under condemnation. And the Jews read this awful proclamation and reading they believed, and believing what was written they gave expression to their grief in fasting and turning to God. Alas! that God's proclamation telling the sinner of his dreadful condition, of the death and wrath which hangs over him is less believed than the proclamation of the Persian enemy of the Jews. Yet to know and to enjoy real salvation and deliverance, the realization of our real condition as lost sinners is eminently necessary.

As already stated, Esther is a faint type of our Lord in his respect that she was willing to sacrifice herself in behalf of her people; while He gave that blessed life and died for that nation. (John xii: 551.)

ESTHER AND THE KING. HAMAN'S DELUSION.

CHAPTER V.

1. Esther before the King and her Request (verses 1–8).
2. Haman's Delusion (verses 9–14).

Verses 1–8. On the third day Esther put on her royal apparel, a significant day in Scripture as we point out in the typical application of this chapter. The days of fasting and agony were passed and she is seen no longer attired in sackcloth but in royal garments. It is of great interest that Rabbinical exposition (Midrash) gives a tradition that in her great anxiety and anguish of soul she uttered the opening sentence of Psalm xxii, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" She made use of

the very words which the most ancient Jewish exponents understood as referring to the Messiah and which came from the lips of our Lord when He bore our sins in His body on the tree.

Clothed in her majestic robes, probably wearing the crown the King had placed upon her head, she entered in and stood in the inner court, which was the entrance gate to the pillared hall at the opposite end of which the King sat on his throne. The King saw her and she obtained favour — grace — in his sight.

And the King held out the golden sceptre which was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. The beautiful typical meaning of this the reader will find at the close of this chapter. The royal sceptre, the emblem of royal power is extended towards her, the sign of the King's favour, and she touched the sceptre.* In touching the sceptre she expressed her need of it. She touched the royal sceptre of power and authority — because from this she seeks and expects deliverance. And it was the touch of faith. And so at once the King recognizing her action and what was behind it said, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther? And what is thy request? It will be given thee even to the half of the kingdom." Instead of asking for a big gift she requests that the King and Haman be present at a banquet she had prepared. The initials in the Hebrew of the sentence "Let the King and Haman come" spell the word Yahweh, which is Jehovah. This the rabbis used to prove that the name of God is mentioned in this book. While this is merely fanciful, we know that Jehovah is revealed in the manifestation of His power in behalf of His people. It must have mystified the King that such a request came from Esther. But she made the petition for she wanted Haman to be present when she uncovered the plot to the King. And the King urged haste upon Haman. He was hurrying to his doom. At the banquet he repeated

* The Latin translation — the Vulgate — translates "she kissed the sceptre."

his question to find out what her petition was. It was customary among Oriental Kings that petitions were offered and then easily granted at banquets. He repeats his offer also that even if it is the half of the Kingdom, it is to be performed. This benevolence of the King proved to the Queen his affection for her and hence the success of her great mission. She still holds back her petition. She invites to another banquet on the next day when she promises to make known her petition. In this she exhibited great wisdom. She made the King curious and expectant.

Verses 9–14. Haman's pride produces a delusion. He congratulates himself over the honour the Queen has done him. It was a day of joy and gladness of heart. And how he was moved with indignation when he beholds again Mordecai standing up and not doing him the honour which in his delusion he thinks is now more due him than before. Why did he not kill him at once? According to Persian law one who sat at the King's gate put himself under the protection of the King. As long as he was there he was safe. Now this being the case, if Haman had killed Mordecai, his enemies would have reported the matter to the King that he had murdered one who had placed himself under the protecting wings of the King, who had appealed for protection. Haman knew the possible consequences. Therefore he fetched his friends and his wife Zeresh. He gives a review of his riches and his honors including the latest of being invited by the Queen. Then he tells of his vexation. "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's gate." Then comes from his friends and his wife the advice. The suggested gallows are made to hang Mordecai and Haman waits, perhaps impatiently, for the morrow when he would go in merrily to the King and request the execution of the Jew. In his delusion and pride he did not know that he built the gallows for himself.

TYPICAL APPLICATION.

This chapter is especially rich in its symbolical, typical and dispensational meaning. It was on the third day that Esther came forth to enter into the presence of the King. The third day throughout Scripture is the day of resurrection and life, the day of blessing and glory. On the third day in the first chapter of Genesis the submerged earth came out of the waters and brought forth its beautiful vegetation. This speaks of resurrection and it is the first time this type is found in the Word of God. Many times after that the third day in the history of Israel is mentioned, as well as the third time, and each time it carries with it the same lesson. (See 2 Kings xx:5; Jonah and his experience, etc.) All these passages are blessed types of Him who was raised on the third day after He finished the work the Father gave Him to do. And so is Esther a type. She passed typically through a death experience in her fasting, with deep anguish of soul. If I perish, I perish, she had said; ready to sacrifice herself. When she stands in her royal garments before the King on the third day with her death experience behind she reminds us of Him who left the grave behind and is now garbed in resurrection glory. The golden sceptre tells of divine righteousness, power and grace. That sceptre is extended to all who come to God in that blessed and worthy Name. We can come with boldness to the throne of grace, obtaining mercy and finding grace to help in time of need. And there are other Gospel applications which we can make. Esther's entering in to the King was not according to law. Law excluded her from the presence of the King. So we are excluded from being in God's presence, because we are sinners. But Love has made a way through the Beloved One in whom we are accepted. And the banquet which Esther made for the King was for more than giving refreshment to him who loved her, as we can refresh Him also. It was a banquet to expose the enemy, to stop his accusation and take his power away from him.

And all this is graciously accomplished in a spiritual way through the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ.

If we look upon Esther as a type of the Jewish remnant we see again her fasting and agony the tribulation through which this remnant passeth. But there comes a third day. This prophecy declares. "After two days will He revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him" (Hosea vi: i). The third day will surely come when Israel will rise out of the dust and when the golden sceptre will be extended to His earthly people.

In Haman we see the arrogant pride of the enemy of God and the final enemy of the Jewish people. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. xvi: 18), was true of Haman, it is true of all who walk in pride and will finally be exemplified in the total defeat of him, who exalteth himself above all that is called God.

THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT AND MORDECAI'S EXALTATION.

CHAPTER VI.

1. The Sleepless Night (verses 1–3).
2. The Exaltation of Mordecai (verses 4–11).
3. Haman anticipates his doom (verses 12–14).

Verses 1–3. A sleepless night is the next event. The King wanted to sleep but sleep refused to come. What was the cause of his insomnia? Some say too much excitement and anxiety in connection with his kingdom; others that he was speculating on the petition the Queen would make on the morrow. The ancient Jewish expositors say that God took his sleep away from him. And this is the correct answer. His wakefulness was ordered by God. Next God puts it into his heart to order the book of record of the chronicles to be brought so that they might be read to him, not to produce sleep but to spend the sleepless night in a profitable way. Once more we see

the hand of God in directing the reading of the record of Mordecai's discovery of the plot against the King's life and how he had saved the King. The deed of Mordecai had been unrewarded through the wise purpose of the Lord; and now it is brought to light by the same providence. In that memorable, sleepless night the machinations of revenge, so finely spun in the dark, are suddenly arrested and their exposure becomes assured. And let us remember that the same providence still works, mysteriously and openly in the lives of God's people.

The King hears that Mordecai had not been rewarded. His pride and dignity were suddenly stirred up. He felt it was not just that such a deed should go unrewarded. It must also have come to his mind that this Mordecai had not reminded the King of his deed, by sending a petition for a reward or by requesting a favour, so common in Oriental life. He had kept silent.

Verses 4–11. The King must have been indignant that such a matter had been overlooked and he wants to have the matter rectified at once. He asks "Who is in the court?" Whosoever would be there would have to carry out the King's commission. He did not expect that Haman was waiting outside. Perhaps he also had a sleepless night, nervously excited as he thought that soon Mordecai would dangle from the gallows; and how he would enjoy the banquet of Esther on the same day. He was in a great hurry and desired that the execution of the despised Jew should take place in the early morning. All is working together and God's majestic hand is seen every step of the way! "Never was there exhibited a more frivolous and thoughtless judgment than that shown by many higher critics in their light estimation of the Book of Esther. For surely there can be no more beautiful description of the impending dramatic catastrophe than that with which the whole of this book is full. At the moment when the mind of the King has but one thought, to compensate Mordecai with the long-merited honour and dignity, and so much the more because it ought to

have been done long ago, at the very moment when he looks for a person to carry out his plans, just then, Haman appears on the scene." *

And the King asks Haman "What shall be done unto the man whom the King delighteth to honour?" In his blind self-love, his deluded pride, Haman thought he was the man to whom the King would do still more honour. Well says a writer in the Talmud—"inasmuch as the writer of the Book of Esther knew what was in Haman's heart, he must have been inspired in writing this account."

And pride fills his lips with an extraordinary demand. When his wicked lips spoke the words, he must have imagined himself clad in royal apparel riding the King's charger, wearing his crown, and thus led forth through the city, announced by the town-crier that he is the man whom the King delighteth to honour.

The King speaks: "Make haste and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the King's gate, let nothing fail of all thou hast spoken." What a thunderbolt this must have been for Haman! While he dreamt of his own honour and greatness he is suddenly awakened by the unalterable command of the King, whose word is law, to do all he had spoken to the man whom he hated and despised, whose death warrant he expected to have signed by the King. He could not tarry in the King's presence for the King demanded haste. He could not parley with the King; that would have been an insult. All that was left to Haman was to make haste and take the apparel and the horse to Mordecai. He arrayed him and then led him through the city and proclaimed before him the King's message. And Mordecai? His mouth must have been filled with laughter and with praises to His God, when his deadly enemy came to do him honour. How great was his triumph in the marvellous exaltation brought about by the keeper of Israel, who neither sleeps nor slumbers! The Jews read the entire book of Esther on the Purim

* Professor Cassel.

feast. When the reader reaches this passage he reads the record with a raised and triumphant voice.

Verses 12–14. Mordecai is back at the gate; Haman in bitter disappointment, with evil forebodings, his head covered, the sign of grief, returns to his wife and friends. When they hear what happened they told him that his case would be hopeless. In the conflict between the Jew and the offspring of Amalek, victory is on the side of the Jew. (Exod. xvii:16; Numb. xxiv:20; Deut. xxv:17–19.) And then the King's chamberlains knocked at the door to hurry Haman to Esther's banquet.

TYPICAL APPLICATION.

The great lesson of this chapter is the wonderful working of divine providence. Surely "God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." And how He cares for His people and watcheth over them! He is still the same, for He is the Lord who changeth not.

And Mordecai stands out in this chapter as another type of our Lord. All the men of God in Old Testament history, in their humiliation and exaltation, like Joseph, Moses, David, etc., are types of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord.

What was done to Mordecai will also be some future day the happy lot of Israel when they will be delivered out of the hand of their enemies.

THE SECOND BANQUET AND HAMAN'S MISERABLE END.

CHAPTER VII.

1. The Second Banquet and Esther's Petition (verses 1–4).
2. Haman's Exposure (verses 5–6).
3. Haman's miserable End (verses 7–10).

Verses 1–4. Esther at this second feast knew that the God of her fathers was at work and that all the hatred against her race came not from the heart of the King, but

centered in Haman. In the events of the sleepless night and what followed she must have seen the display of the hand of God. And now she utters her delayed petition. Her petition is that her life may be spared as well as her people. How astonished the King must have looked as he gazed upon his beautiful wife and learned from her lips that her life was in danger. And still greater must have been his surprise when he hears "For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish." What a scene! The handsome Queen, her marvellous earnestness and eloquence in pleading for her life and for her people; the darkening, astonished countenance of the King, the blanching face of Haman and the others in the banquet hall in great excitement.

And her heart-rending plea, perhaps mingled with tears which coursed down her cheeks, did not fail to produce the desired effect.

Verses 5–6. The King must have been more than astonished; he must have been angry. Who dared to plot against the life of the beautiful Queen and deprive him of her? Who dared to sell her and her people for slaughter? Even then before he hears from Esther the name of the man, he must have realized, that the crouching Haman is the man. "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" Her answer is brief but eloquent. With flashing eyes and pointing her finger to the guest at her side she said, "An adversary and an enemy, even this wicked Haman!" The scene is beyond comparison. Then Haman was afraid before the King and the Queen. He anticipated the fearful storm which would break over his head.

Verses 7–10. The King arose in his wrath. Close to the banquet hall was the garden. There the King went in the heat of his wrath and the great excitement which had seized upon him and made him speechless. When an Oriental King or Sultan arises angry from his own table, then there is no mercy for him that causeth it.* In the

* Rosenmueller in "Oriental Studies on Esther,"

meantime Haman begs cowardly for his life. He must have fallen at her feet with weeping and wailing. And Esther did not open her lips. Then Haman in his agonizing plea falls upon the couch where Esther was. At that moment the King re-entered the banquet hall. He has regained his speech and when he beholds Haman on the couch he utters a word of bitter sarcasm, as if he had designs upon the honour of the Queen. No sooner had the King spoken the word, the attending servants covered Haman's face. This was a Persian custom. The face of a criminal was covered to indicate that he was no longer worthy to behold the light and that the darkness of death would be his lot.

The gallows which Haman had prepared for Mordecai is used for his own execution. Critics point out the statement that the gallows 50 cubits high (80 feet) stood in Haman's house and they raise the question "how could an 80 foot long pole be gotten into any one's house?" But the word gallows means in the Hebrew "Tree." Probably a tree standing in the garden of Haman was made ready with a rope to hang the hated Jew. It is characteristic of the critics to take such minor things to discredit the accuracy of Scripture.

TYPICAL APPLICATION.

Haman illustrates the work and the ignominous end of the final Anti-Christ who troubles Israel. Haman had almost succeeded. But when the proper moment came God acted in behalf of His people and Haman falls forever. So that coming man of sin will almost succeed, but in the end of the great tribulation, the final 1260 days or three years and a half, with which this age closes, the power of God will be displayed in the complete victory over this enemy of God and man. Haman's end came by the decree of the King and the Anti-Christ will be destroyed by the Coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

MORDECAI'S EXALTATION. THE SECOND PROCLAMATION.

CHAPTER VIII.

1. Mordecai's Exaltation (verses 1–2).
2. Esther's Second Petition (verses 3–8).
3. The Second Proclamation (verses 9–14).
4. The Joy of the Jews (verses 15–17).

Verses 1–2. Esther the Queen receives from the King the possessions of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Then she revealed what Mordecai was to her, her uncle and foster-father. The King had taken the signet-ring of authority from the hand of Haman. The same ring Mordecai received. Esther honoured her uncle by placing him over the house of Haman.

Verses 3–6. But while Mordecai had become the Prime-minister of Persia, Haman the Agagite had been executed, and all his property given to the Queen, the horrible decree still stood; the first proclamation was still in force. Something had to be done to complete the deliverance of her people. Her life and Mordecai's life had been spared, but what about her beloved people? It is true the fateful day was still in the future, but the evil decreed and not yet recalled had to be met in some way. Once more she enters into the presence of the King. Once more the King holds out the golden sceptre, from which we learn that his decree was still in force and that, therefore, Esther once more risked her life. But she knew he loved her. Knowing this she cast herself at his feet and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman, and his devices he had devised against the Jews. Her pleading and her tears were not in vain. Her petition is that the letters of Haman, demanding the destruction of her people, should be reversed. "For how can I endure to see the evil that will come upon my people? or how can I endure the destruction of my kindred? The King answers her. But the former decree cannot be re-

voked; it must stand. Laws made by Persian kings could not be altered or changed. (See Daniel vi: 15.) A revocation of the edict is impossible and the former proclamation therefore stands. This Persian custom had for its foundation the idea that a "decree" must be looked upon in the light of an emanation from the King as a person with divine authority. But inasmuch as Mordecai had now the signet-ring, which authorized him to issue decrees in the name of the King, he could do anything he pleased and write to the Jews in the name of the King and this second proclamation would also be irrevocable.

Verses 7–14. Then followed a great activity. The scribes were called and Mordecai dictated the message. It was addressed to the governors and princes of the whole empire from India to Ethiopia and written in many languages. He wrote in the name of the King and sealed it with his ring. The letters were dispatched by posts on horseback, riding on swift steeds that were used in the King's service. The proclamation contained the following good news: "The King grants the Jews in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, their little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, upon one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, that is upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar." The proclamation of death stood, but alongside of it there was given a proclamation of life. They needed not to die. Their enemies were given into their hands. Acting upon this second proclamation, believing its contents, they learned that while the first decree stood and could not be revoked, the second decree set them free from death and gave them liberty.

Verses 15–17. How things had changed under God's merciful dealings with His people! When that first decree was issued Mordecai sat in sackcloth and ashes and all the Jews wept and wailed. But now when the second decree was announced Mordecai went forth from the presence

of the King in royal apparel of blue, white and purple, the Persian colours.* On his head he had a great crown of gold. There was great joy in the city of Shushan. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and glory. Throughout the vast kingdom there was nothing but joy. Furthermore many people became Jews.

TYPICAL APPLICATION.

In Mordecai's exaltation as given in this chapter, in Haman's possession handed over to the Queen and her uncle, in the authority which both received, we have a fine foreshadowing of what will take place when the final Haman is overthrown. That will be when the times of the Gentiles are passed and the King, our Lord, has come back. Then Israel will get her great blessings, promised long ago by a covenant keeping God.

Like it was in Mordecai's and Esther's day, the riches of the Gentiles will be given unto them. "Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." (Isaiah lx: 5.) Israel restored will then be the head of the nations and no longer the tail. As many people became Jews as recorded in the last verse of this chapter, so in that coming day, ten men out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of a Jew and say "we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (Zech. viii: 23.) "And many nations shall be joined unto the Lord in that day" (Zech. ii: 11). All this blessing for the Jews in Persia was brought about by the heroic deed of Esther, who passed through a great struggle, who risked her life that her people might be saved. And the promised blessings and glory can only come to the people Israel through Him who gave His life,

* They illustrate the ancient Persian view about the world. White the colour of light, blue, the sky, and purple was brought in connection with the sun.

the true King and Shepherd of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Gospel application the second decree or proclamation is of much interest. It typifies and illustrates the good news. As we saw, the first decree illustrates the sentence of death passed upon the whole race on account of sin. The second decree does not cancel the first, but declares that which liberates from death, sets free and gives power. And that is the good news as it is given in the Cross of Christ. Death is met by death; the death of the Son of God in the sinner's place, bearing the curse, sets free from the law of sin and death. Thus the sinner's doom is fully met in the death of Christ. "This second decree has been nailed to the cross of Christ, it has been revealed in His sacrificial death, written with His blood, sealed by His bowed head, uttered by His expiring cry. It has a twofold effect. First, the sinner who avails himself of it, who believes, is saved. It arrays all the forces of righteousness on his side and enables him to find his surest protection in that which but for the work of Christ must have condemned him. Then it puts him in a position to rise up against his enemies by whom as a captive he was enslaved and to lead his captivity captive. From the condemnation of the law and from the cruel dominion of sin believing sinners are equally delivered by the proclamation of the Gospel in the cross of Christ, as the Jews had righteous power given to them over their enemies.

But faith was necessary for the Jews. They had to believe the second proclamation as they believed the first. Woe unto the Jews when that thirteenth day of the month Adar came and they acted not upon the second decree. Then the first decree would have been carried out upon their heads and they would have suffered death. So must the sinner believe the first decree — that death is sentence as a sinner; then he must believe the second decree "Christ died for the ungodly"— there is life in a look to the crucified One. And as the Jews had light, gladness, joy

and glory because they believed, even so he who believes the good news has salvation peace, joy and glory.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF ADAR. THE FEAST OF PURIM.

CHAPTER IX.

1. The Resistance and Victory of the Jews (verses 1–11).
2. Esther's petition (verses 12–16).
3. The Institution of Purim (verses 17–19).
4. The Messages of Mordecai and Esther (verses 20–32).

Verses 1–11. The fateful day, the thirteenth day of Adar, came and with it the retribution for the enemies of the Jews. On that day they gathered together to withstand all who would assault them. The princes and governors and all other officials of the King helped the Jews, because they knew the influential position which Mordecai held and that he waxed greater and greater. Theirs was a great victory. In Shushan itself 500 were slain and 300 more in another part of the city; there were 75,000 slain in the provinces. The ten sons of Haman were slain; their Persian names are given.

Verses 12–16. The King heard the report of the number of his subjects slain in Shushan the fortress and then asks the Queen to make a petition. She requests that an additional day be given to continue the work in Shushan and that the ten sons of Haman be hanged on gallows. But had they not slain already 500 in Shushan? The 500 were killed in the palace, or, as that word should be rendered, citadel, fortress; the extra day was requested to continue the retributive work in the city itself. The request was granted and the ten sons of Haman were hanged. On the spoil, the goods and possessions of those slain, they did not touch, probably to avoid false accusations, though the decree gave them permission to spoil their enemies. When Jews read in orthodox synagogues the Book of Esther they read the names of Haman's ten sons in one

breath, as quickly as possible, intimating thereby that they all were exterminated at one and the same time.

Verses 17–19. With the fourteenth day of Adar they rested and made it a feast of rejoicing. The Jews in Shushan celebrated the thirteenth and fourteenth day and rested on the fifteenth day. This is the origin of the traditional feast of Purim still kept by the orthodox Jews in commemoration of the great deliverance and the wonderful history of Mordecai and Esther. It is mostly celebrated by the public reading of this book and by the distribution of gifts.

Verses 20–32. The final section of this chapter gives the account of a message which Mordecai sent to the Jews in the provinces of the Persian Kingdom enjoining them to observe these days, the feast of Purim. Queen Esther also wrote with all authority confirming this second letter of Purim.

TYPICAL APPLICATION.

What happened to the enemies of the Jews in Shushan and the Persian provinces will be the lot of all those who hate them. This is often made known in the prophetic Word. Thus spake Balaam: "His King (Israel's King) shall be higher than Agag, and His kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn; he shall eat of the nations his enemies and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with arrows." (Numbers xxiv: 7–8.) The Lord Himself will arise in behalf of His people and judge their enemies, for it is written "I will render vengeance to mine enemies and will reward them that hate me." (Deut. xxxii: 41.) In this respect this little book with its history is a prophecy of the ultimate victory of God's chosen people over their enemies. In all their history it has been true, and will be finally true in the fullest sense of the word what Isaiah wrote: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." (Isaiah liv: 17.)

The ten sons of Haman, so fully identified with the

wicked father, are also not without meaning. The final form of the Gentile government in the close of the age was revealed to Daniel. It consists of ten kingdoms, seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream image and in Daniel's ten-horned beast, forming once more the Roman empire. It will be domineered over by the little horn, who works together with the man of sin. The ten sons of Haman and their miserable end are another illustration of prophetic truth.

AHASVERUS AND MORDECAI. THE CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER X.

The three verses with which this book closes tell us of the greatness of King Ahasverus. Here also is the record of the increasing greatness of Mordecai. He was next unto King Ahasverus, great among the Jews, accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people and speaking peace to all his seed. A blessed type of Him who is greater than Mordecai and who will some day bring peace to His earthly people and who will speak peace to the nations. The precious little book ends with peace.

JOB

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The Book of Job.

Introduction.

The Book of Job belongs to the poetical books of the Old Testament. The other poetical books are: The Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon and Lamentations. In the Hebrew Bible they are found in the third section, called Kethubim (the Writings, Hagiographa). The arrangement in the Hebrew Bible differs from that in our English version. It is as follows — Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Lamentations and Ecclesiastes.

It needs to be explained that Hebrew poetry is different from the poetry of occidental languages. It knows nothing of rhymed verses, though a rhythmical arrangement is quite often noticeable. The fundamental law of Hebrew poetry is parallelism, which is also very frequently found in the other books which are not classed as poetical. This parallelism has been divided in a threefold form. The *synonymous,* in which the same sentiment is repeated in different but equivalent words, as in Ps. xxv:4, "Show me Thy ways O Lord, Teach me Thy Paths"; the *antithetical,* in which the parallel members express the opposite sides of the same thought as in Psalm xx:8.

"They are brought down and fallen,
But we are risen and stand upright."

The synthetical or constructive, in which the two members contain two disparate ideas, which, however, are connected by a certain affinity between them, as in Prov. i:7:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
But fools despise wisdom and instruction."

The Book of Job is in the form of a great dramatic poem, in which we have the following actors: Job of the land of Uz and his wife; his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar; Elihu the son of Barachel, and Jehovah and the accuser, Satan. The question arises at once, since this Book is cast in the form of a drama, is it romantic fiction or history? The critical school declares that it must not be regarded as history at all, though it is claimed that the author may have had some traditional material of a righteous man who was a great sufferer and then the poet worked out the drama, adding fictitious matter. To show the mode of the critical reasoning of the critical school we quote from Dr. A. S. Peake, who says in his expository work on Job: "That this book must not be regarded as historical is shown by the account of the heavenly councils, by the

symbolic numbers of Job's family and flocks, by the escape of one messenger and one only from each catastrophe, by the exact doubling of his possessions at the end of the trial. And even more obvious is it that the speeches of Job and his friends cannot be literal reports of actual speeches, since they mark the highest point attained by Hebrew poetical genius, and since no such debate could be imagined in the patriarchal age." But if we believe that this Book, like all the other books of the Bible, is given by inspiration, all these objections fall to the ground. Man knew not what was going on in heaven, but the Lord can reveal these unseen things and make known what happens in His own presence. If the record of the scenes in heaven in chapters i and ii are not historical, not revelation, then they are mere human inventions, unworthy of our confidence. And why is it impossible that a controversy such as this Book records could not have taken place in the patriarchal age? Evidently the author believes that the patriarchal age was too unenlightened to produce such brilliant speeches. Such reasoning is the natural offspring of evolution.

The Book of Job is real history. Job is not the creation of a great, unknown poetic genius, some ancient playwright, he was a real person, who lived; the book gives the great and remarkable experience of his life. The first statement with which the book opens is sufficient to show the historicity of Job. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job." Two other books in the Bible speak of him also as a historic person. Twice in the fourteenth chapter of Ezekiel we find him mentioned alongside of Noah and Daniel (Ezek. xiv:14, 20). He is therefore not any more fictitious than Noah and the prophet Daniel. In the New Testament the Apostle James mentions his name and calls attention to his patience.

Who was Job?

Who was Job, when and where did he live? These questions cannot be definitely answered. According to rabbinical tradition he lived in Abraham's times, or, according to another tradition, he lived when Jacob's sons were grown up. If the latter view is true then he might be the Job who is mentioned as Issachar's son in Genesis xlvi:13. But there are also many other traditions which are very fanciful and mostly legendary. The land of Uz has been located somewhat East of Palestine, in the great fertile lands of North-eastern Idumea. That he must have lived in patriarchal days is proven by the contents of the book itself. We have no mention in this book of the Law, nor of the levitical institutions, priesthood and sacrifices.* Nothing

* Sacrifices are mentioned in the beginning and end of the book. But no priest is indicated. It is the primitive way of approaching God by a sacrifice.

is said of the history of Israel, nor is there a quotation from the writings of the prophets. We move evidently in this book in a time before the Law was given and before Abraham's seed constituted a nation.

The Author and Date of the Book.

Who wrote the book of Job cannot be determined. Some think it was Job himself to whom God by His Spirit dictated the Book after he had passed through the suffering. Some suggest Elihu as the chosen instrument to preserve this experience of Job. Not a few believe that Moses wrote the book. It matters but little who the penman was; we know that behind that pen stood the Spirit of God, who after all is the real author of this and every other Bible Book.

The Critics have made havoc with the probable date when the book was written. We quote again Dr. Peake, who in discussing the date of Job weaves in a piece of pernicious Bible Exegesis which strikes deeper than a late date for Job. "The problem (of the date when Job was written) is no longer in its elementary stage. It has been long pondered and discussed, and this agrees best with a date considerably later than that of Jeremiah. Several Scholars have placed it towards the close of the Exile, making the author of Isa. xl–lv. A comparison of the two writers discloses correspondence which cannot be accidental. There are especially close points of contact between the figure of Job and that of the suffering servant of Jehovah. The Servant is to be identified with the historical Israel, which had died in the Exile and was to be restored to life by a return from captivity and re-establishment in its old home. The meaning of its suffering and death is closely connected with its mission to the world. That mission was to bring to the Gentiles the knowledge of the true God. . . . The sufferings of Israel are accordingly interpreted as vicarious; by its stripes the nations are healed." Isaiah liii, that sublime prophecy of Christ the sin-bearer, is thus interpreted as meaning the nation and then by an involved argument the authorship of Job is put into the time when the imagined "Deutero-Isaiah" wrote his part, which the ancient Jews and the Church of the past always believed to have been the work of the one Isaiah, and being the divine prediction of the suffering Christ. In their antagonism to the Bible as the infallible Word of God, the Critics declare also that Job must have been written in post-exilic times, on account of Satan being mentioned and "Satan (they say) occurs in no early literature, but only in Zechariah and Chronicles."

And this is called scholarship! The fact, however, is that the Hebrew of the Book of Job is in style not the Hebrew of a later, but of very early times. Traces of the Chaldee language are found in the Hebrew of Job. Yet these peculiarities which are antagonistic to a pure Hebrew style are really an evidence to the very

oldest date in which this book must have been written. They are not in reality Chaldeisms, but rather Arabicisms, and are proof of a very great antiquity of the book, and show that its composition was made, when Hebrew and Arabic had not diverged. That is why one of the greatest Oriental Scholars, Gensenius, wrote: "There is in this book much that is analogous to the Arabic language, or that may be explained by it." Inasmuch then as the Book exhibits a fine picture of patriarchal times and its language also bears witness to a very early date all the objections of the Critics are void.

The Story of the Book.

The Book begins with a prologue in which we are introduced to the central figure, Job. We hear of him as an excellent, God-fearing man, surrounded with great prosperity. Then the scene changes and the veil is drawn aside from the unseen world. We see what is going on in heaven and how Satan, the accuser of the brethren, when the Lord mentions His servant Job, sneers in Jehovah's face "Doth Job serve God for nought?" and then challenges God to put forth His hand and to touch all that he hath. Satan is confident that Job would curse Him to His face. How Satan is permitted to carry out his own suggestion, we read in the first chapter. Yet after Job is stripped of all, he did not sin nor did he charge God foolishly.

Again we are in heaven and the same scene is before us. Satan, defeated in his first attempt, demands that the Lord touch the body of Job, his bone and his flesh, and he is confident Job would curse God. The Lord again permits Satan to do what he demanded with one restriction, Satan cannot touch Job's life. And soon we see Job covered from head to foot with sore boils scraping himself with a potsherd, sitting among the ashes. Only once does his wife appear upon the scene. She said to him, what Satan put into her heart: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die." Job answered her and in all this did not Job sin with his lips. After that the dark shadow disappears. He has lost the battle. God is victor.

Then begins the main portion of the book when the three friends of Job, having heard of his affliction, come to comfort him. Three times each delivers himself of an address, except Zophar who speaks only twice. And eight times Job answers. The subject of the controversy is the mystery of suffering. The result of this lengthy controversy is tersely stated in Chapter XXXII: 2–3. Job through it all justified himself rather than God; the three friends with all their fine orations had not found an answer and yet had condemned Job. Then comes the great testimony of Elihu; this is followed by the Words which Jehovah speaks. Then after Job is in the dust

and cries out "Behold I am vile, I abhor myself!" comes an epilogue. The storm is gone; the sun breaks through the receding storm clouds and the book ends with the Lord blessing the latter end of Job more than his beginning.

The Message of the Book.

The message of the Book of Job is concerning the suffering of the Righteous. Why do the godly suffer? How can their suffering be harmonized with the righteousness of God? If God is Love and He loveth His Saints why have they afflictions? In one word the theme of the Book is the mystery of Suffering. The answer to these questions concerning the suffering of the Godly is twofold. God permits their suffering for His own Glory. This we learn in the first two chapters. God received glory to Himself when Job, enabled by His Grace and by His power, sinned not in the midst of the fiery trials through which he passed. Then God permits the righteous to suffer for their own good. It was a wholesome experience for Job; the sufferings chastened him and he received great blessing. This is the double answer in the Book of Job as to the suffering of God's people. And yet there is a mystery of suffering which will only be fully bared when God's Saints are in His presence and "know as we are known." Till then we walk in faith, trusting Him who has told us "that all things must work together for good to them that love God."

The Division of the Book of Job.

The division of the Book of Job is not difficult to make. There is first a prologue, that is followed by the main portion of the Book, and in conclusion we have an epilogue. We divide the book into seven parts which we shall follow in a closer analysis with the annotations on the most important truths.

I. **THE INTRODUCTION.** Verses 1–5.

II. **THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JEHOVAH AND SATAN AND THE RESULTS.** Chapter I: 6–11.

III. **THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JOB AND HIS FRIENDS.** Chapter II: 11–27.

1. **First Series of Controversies.**
   - **The Friend's Arrival.** Chapter II: 11–13.
   - **Job's Lament.** Chapter III.
   - **Eliphaz's Address.** Chapter IV.
   - **Job's Answer.** Chapters VI–VII.
   - **Bildad's Address.** Chapter VIII.
   - **Job's Answer.** Chapters IX–X.
   - **Zophar's Address.** Chapter XI.
   - **Job's Answer.** Chapters XII–XIV.
2. **Second Series of Controversies.**
   - **Eliphaz's Address.** Chapter XV.
   - **Job's Answer.** Chapters XVI–XVII.
   - **Bildad's Address.** Chapter XVIII.
   - **Job's Answer.** Chapter XIX.
   - **Zophar's Address.** Chapter XX.
   - **Job's Answer.** Chapter XXI.
3. **Third Series of Controversies.**
   - **Eliphaz's Address.** Chapter XXII.
   - **Job's Answer.** Chapters XXIII–XXIV.
   - **Bildad's Address.** Chapter XXV.
   - **Job's Answer.** Chapters XXVI–XXXI.

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF ELIHU. Chapters XXXII–XXXVII.

V. JEHOVAH'S TESTIMONY AND CONTROVERSY WITH JOB. Chapters XXXVIII–XLI.

VI. THE CONFESSION OF JOB. Chapter XLII: 1–6.

VII. THE EPILOGUE. JOB'S RESTORATION AND BLESSING. Chapter XLII: 7–17.

Analysis and Annotations.

I. THE INTRODUCTION.

Chapter I: 1–5.

We are at once introduced to the leading person of this book. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil." As already stated in the introduction, the land of Uz was East of Palestine and probably a part of Idumea, or in close proximity to the land of Edom. This seems to be confirmed by Lamentations iv: 21: "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz." Uz is also mentioned in Jeremiah xxv: 20. It must have been on the borderland of Edom, if it was not a part of it. In Genesis xxii: 20–21, we read of the sons of Abraham's brother Nahor; among them are two named Uz and Buz. (Elihu was of Buz, xxxii: 1.)

The meaning of the name Job is "persecuted" or "afflicted." His character is described as most excellent. He was perfect, which of course does not mean that he was sinless, without any flaw in his character. He was a whole-hearted man with a well balanced solid character. In his dealings with others he was righteous, always upright and doing the right thing. He feared God, walking in the fear of God, which proves that he was a child of God, born again; and therefore he shunned evil in every form. This brief description of Job shows that he was an unusual man. The Lord Himself bore witness to this fact, for He said to Satan "there is none like him in the earth."

Great blessing rested upon him and upon his house. His family consisted of seven sons and three daughters. Of cattle he had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses and a very great household. He was in every way,

in his character, in his enormous wealth, the greatest man of the children of the East. His was the position of a prince among men with a princely household. Then follows a pleasing scene, a sample of how he conducted himself. His sons and daughters lacked nothing; they feasted and enjoyed life together in the midst of the great prosperity with which God had blessed them. There is nothing to indicate that it was sinful pleasure in which they indulged. But Job had a tender conscience. He wanted to make provision in case his children had sinned and "cursed God in their hearts." The Hebrew for "curse" is "bless" and the meaning is to renounce God, to forget and turn away from Him. Notice that Job feared some such thought of turning away from God might have entered their young hearts; and that is where all turning away from God starts. And therefore pious Job rose up early in the morning and besides sanctifying them he also offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all. He knew God's Holiness and the true mode of approach, by a sacrifice, the shedding of blood "without which there is no remission of sins." How far he himself entered into the joys of his family we do not know; nor does he mention himself as needing a sacrifice.

II. THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JEHOVAH AND SATAN AND THE RESULTS.
Chapters I: 6–II: 10.

CHAPTER I: 6–22.

1. A scene in Heaven, Jehovah's challenge and Satan's accusation (verses 6–12).
2. Satan's power manifested (verses 13–19).
3. Job's great grief and great Victory (verses 20-22).

Verses 6–12. Suddenly the scene changeth. We are no longer on earth but heaven is opened and we read what is going on before the throne of God. While Job on earth with his loved ones is enjoying himself something takes place in heaven in which he is prominently concerned and yet he is ignorant of all.

The whole scene is intensely interesting. It is not fiction but revelation, and what is here recorded actually took place and something like it still goes on in heaven. A parallel passage is found in 1 Kings xix: 22. The prophet Micaiah saw the Lord sitting on His throne and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. And then the Lord permitted as a judgment upon Ahab, that a lying spirit should enter Ahab's prophets to deceive Ahab.

Heaven as a place is not fiction. There is an uncreated Heaven where God's throne and dwelling place have always been. From the passage here we may gather that there are certain times when all heavenly tenants, good and evil, have to assemble before the Lord. The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord. The expression "sons of God" does not mean believers on earth (the sonship of a believer is a N. T. truth), but supernatural beings, the angels. According to this book these sons of God shouted for joy in the hour of creation (xxxviii: 7). Other Scriptures speak of such heavenly gatherings. (See Psalm lxxxix 5–7; Zech. iv, etc.) And Satan came also among them. He likewise must appear before the

Lord. Satan means "adversary." In this character, as the accuser of the brethren he is seen in the last book of the Bible and according to Rev. xii he is still active in the same capacity as in the days of Job, and has still access to the throne of God, till the hour comes when his doom begins with being cast out of heaven. Destructive Criticism pronounceth Satan a Babylonian or Persian myth, a reproduction in Hebrew literature of the Persian fable of Ahriman. But even the French Infidel Renan said of the Satan of the Scriptures, "This is quite a different person from the Ahriman of the Zend-Avesta. It is not the spirit of evil existing and acting for himself." He is not independent of God; as one has correctly stated it, "Satan can go only to the end of his chain." The Critical assertion that the belief in a Satan originated after the exile is historically incorrect. The Serpent in Genesis iii is Satan. Originally he was Lucifer, the Son of the Morning (Isaiah xiv), the Cherub that covereth (Ezekiel xxviii) and this great creature of God fell by pride.*

He is forced to give an account to Jehovah. He walked to and fro in the earth and walked up and down in it. He therefore is not in hell. The N. T. tells us that he is "the god of this age" and that his throne is here on earth. He still walks up and down and to and fro. Then God calls his attention to Job and approves his character that there is none like Job. Satan knew Job and hated Job, as he still knows and hates every child of God and is moved with malice towards God's people. And so at once he sneers into the face of the Lord the challenge, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" —"Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath and he will renounce thee to thy face." Then the Lord delivers Job to

* See "The History of Satan" in "Studies in Prophecy" and the larger work on "Satan, His Person, Work and Destiny."—"Our Hope." Publication.

Satan; gives him the permission to take all that he hath, only upon the person of Job he was not permitted to lay his vile hands. But let us notice that the accusation of Satan is the result of Jehovah's challenge. We quote another.

"It is carefully to be remarked here, that the spring and source of all these dealings is not Satan's accusations, but God Himself. God knew what His servant Job needed, and Himself brings forward his case and sets all in movement. If He demands of Satan if he had considered His servant Job, it is because He Himself had. Satan is but an instrument, and an ignorant though subtle instrument, to bring about God's purposes of grace. His accusations result really in nothing as against Job, save to disprove their truth by what he is allowed to do; but, for Job's good, he is left to his will up to a certain point, for the purpose of bringing Job to a knowledge of his own heart, and thus to a deeper ground of practical relationship with God. How blessed and perfect are God's ways! How vain in result the efforts of Satan's against those that are His!" *

The controversy then is not between Satan and Job, but between Jehovah and Satan. Job is not so much on trial as the Lord Himself. Is God able to keep His servants loyal when the greatest afflictions pass over them? Has the Lord the power to sustain them? To manifest this power, to show forth His own glory, He permits the suffering of the Saint. There are many blessed and comforting truths connected with all this. The best is that we learn that the Lord lovingly watches His people, as He watched Job and spoke well of him and that it is an honor not chastisement when He permits afflictions and sorrow to come.

Satan could not attack the righteousness of Job, but he impeacheth his motives in serving God. In this he only revealed his own character. He attributes the godliness of

* Synopsis.

Job to the selfishness in Job. Then comes his challenge. The conflict is on and it is to be seen if one who is the Lord's, who trusts in Him, can be made by adversities to turn his back upon God and forsake Him; — or is God able to keep?

Verses 13–19. "So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord." The accuser now acts the roaring lion. And now his work against Job begins. But caution is needed here lest powers be ascribed to Satan which he in reality does not possess. Satan is only a creature and does not share the attributes of God. He is not omnipotent; nor is he omniscient, nor omnipresent. If he displays powers it is with divine permission only. Of course here are secrets which we cannot fathom nor fully understand. Questions upon questions might be asked on this subject which the finite mind cannot answer; problems are here which no human can solve. But we know that all God's ways are perfect, yet past finding out.

And so here he is permitted to use powers to carry out his purposes. If God had not said, "Behold all that he hath is in thy power," he would have had no power.

Four calamities overtake Job's possessions and household. Satan stirred up the Sabeans (Hebrew: Sheba), a nomadic people, probably robber tribes and under his direction they plunder Job of his most valuable cattle and murdered the servants. No sooner had this happened than another messenger announced that the fire of God, probably not lightning, had fallen from heaven and the sheep and servants who were there had been completely destroyed. Then came the third calamity. The Chaldeans robbed Job of his camels and killed his servants who had charge of them. And then the last affliction which is the greatest of them all. A hurricane tore down the house and his loved ones were killed. His wife is not mentioned. Satan did not touch her for he intended to use her as a tool and as his mouthpiece. Thus suddenly, without any warning whatever, in the midst of earthly happiness, yea, real piety, Job, the great and prosperous Job had been stripped

of all he had. Satan had done his work well. He knew how to be cruel and reserve the worst blow to the last. And all this happened not only under the all-seeing eye of God, but with His own permission.

Verses 20–22. And Job? Not a murmur escapes his lips. He arose; he expressed his great grief by renting his robe, shaving his head. But then he fell as a worshipper upon the ground and uttered the never to be forgotten words, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It was a great victory. Satan had failed completely. The Lord remained the refuge of Job and underneath the everlasting arms.

CHAPTER II: 1–10.

1. Jehovah's second Challenge and Satan's answer (verses 1–6).
2. Job stricken (verses 7–8).
3. Job's Wife. Job's Answer and Victory (verses 9–10).

Verses 1–6. Once more the sons of God, and Satan among them, present themselves before the Lord. It must have been immediately after Job's afflictions had come upon him. Probably the Lord called the assembly. The victory is on the Lord's side. Satan is defeated and his defeat is known to the heavenly hosts, who undoubtedly watched the tragedies which had been enacted on earth and who, with joy, had listened to Job's marvellous words. Triumphantly the Lord said to Satan, "And still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." Then comes Satan's sneer. He has not given up hope. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face." This is bold and horrible language; it shows Satan's knowledge of human nature. And God tells Satan, "Behold, he is in thine hands." What an evidence that Satan can do nothing

against the Saints of God without His permission. What a comfort this is! Satan is absolutely under the control of God. And if God permits him to do his evil work, he judiciously designs, God's own love and power are on the side of His afflicted people; His own gracious faithfulness will be demonstrated in the trial. The suffering Saints still learn the lesson which Job had to learn, his own nothingness, and that God is all in all. But there is a gracious restriction. The Lord said, "Only spare his life." Satan might sift Job; his life he could not touch, for the lives of God's people are in the hand of the Lord.

Verses 6–7–8. Satan does not delay long. He carries out his commission and useth his power to the utmost. "He smote him with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." What was the disease? It may have been the disease known as Elephantiasis, a disease of a horrible nature. Other diseases are mentioned also which correspond with the symptoms given in the brief description. "The symptoms given agree better with those of the Biskra sores, an Oriental disease, endemic along the southern shores of the Mediterranean and in Mesopotamia. It begins in the form of papular spots, which ulcerate and become covered with crusts, which are itchy and burning sores" (Prof. Macalister). It must have been the most loathsome disease Satan could think of.

"And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself; and he sat among the ashes." What a sad transformation! The great Eastern Emir, who erstwhile was so rich and influential, stripped of all his possessions, reduced to the most abject poverty, afflicted with a vile and extremely painful disease, takes his place upon the dunghill, amdist the ashes of the burnt refuse. He considers himself an outcast, unfit for a human dwelling.

Verses 9–10. Then his wife makes her only appearing in this drama. She is seen but once and only once she speaks. She must have followed him with weeping and wailing outside to the ash-heap. And now she speaks, but not of herself. Satan uses her as his instrument. He

speaks through her. "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Renounce God and die." That is exactly what Satan had spoken in God's presence, that Job would do this very thing. And now he uses the woman to suggest suicide to Job.

But noble is the answer of the afflicted Saint of God. He detects in her language impiety —"thou speaketh as one of the impious (this is the meaning of foolish) women speaketh." Only those who do not know God can speak as you have spoken, is the meaning of his rebuke. What? shall we receive good at the Hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? The power of God it was which produced such wonderful submission. His Grace enabled him to pass through it all without sinning. What a record! "In all this did not Job sin with his lips!" Satan's defeat is complete. His mouth is stopped. If he appears again before Jehovah he must stand in silence; the last word does not belong to him, but to God. And so is coming the day when Satan's defeat is complete, when he will be completely bruised under the feet of God's people.

III. THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN JOB AND HIS FRIENDS. Chapter II: II–XXXI.

The Friends' Arrival.

CHAPTER II: 11–13.

We now enter upon the main section of the Book. The dark shadow of the accuser of the brethren has disappeared and in his place Job's three friends appear upon the scene. The news of the awful misfortunes had reached them; they made an appointment together to mourn with him and to comfort him. As they are now taking a prominent part in this drama we must examine their names and get some knowledge as to their personality. The first friend is Eliphaz the Temanite. Teman is in Idumea. He may have been the son of Esau (Genesis xxxvi: 10–11). His name means "My God is fine gold." Teman was noted for its wisdom. "Is wisdom no more in Teman?" (Jeremiah xlix: 7.) The second is Bildad the Shuhite. His name means "son of contention," which expresses the character he reveals in his speeches. His name can also be identified with the patriarchal age. Shuah was the sixth son of Abraham by Keturah (Genesis xxv). He is also mentioned in connection with Esau, Edom and Teman. (See Genesis xlix: 8.) Shuah means "depression or prostration." The third friend is Zophar the Naamathite. Of his origin we know nothing. His name means "to twitter" like a bird chirps and twitters. And his addresses, consisting in violent utterances, reveal the senseless and harmless twittering of a bird.

There can be no question that all three were, like Job, God-fearing men. They formed with Job in the patriarchal age a kind of intellectual and religious aristocracy, in the midst of the surrounding idolators. How long their journey took after the news of Job's condition had reached them we do not know. It must have been months later after Job was first stricken, that they came to visit him.

During that time the disease of Job developed fully; his misery did not become less. At last the friends arrived. And as they saw the ash-heap and the miserable figure upon it, they knew him not. He was so disfigured and distorted by the suffering and the disease that they failed to recognize him. They had known him in the days of his great prosperity, when young men were held by his personality in awe, when old men arose to do him honor, when princes refrained from talking and nobles held their peace. (Chapter xxix: 7–10.) What a sad spectacle to see him in this deplorable condition. Their sympathy is expressed by weeping, the rending of their garments and the sprinkling of dust upon their heads toward heaven. What pain it must have given them when they saw that his grief and suffering were so great! Then follows an impressive silence of seven days and seven nights. They are stricken dumb and find no words to utter. But while their lips did not speak their minds were deeply engaged with the problem which ere long they would take up in controversy with the afflicted one. And the question uppermost must have been, "How can God, a righteous God, permit this good man to be in this condition?"—"Why is he stripped of all and in this horrible condition?"

Job's Lament.

CHAPTER III.

1. Job curses the Day of his Birth (verses 1–9).
2. He longs for Death (verses 10–23).
3. The Reason why (verses 24–26).

Verses 1–9. The silence is broken by Job. Alas! his lips do not utter praises now, but he cursed the day of his birth. It was a sore trial for Job to look into the faces of these pious friends, in perfect health and strength, and he, even more pious than they, stricken and smitten of God. It was an aggravation of Job's grief and sorrow.

But let us notice though Job gives way to his feelings in

this passionate outburst, he did not renounce God, nor is there a word of rebellion against Him. All through his addresses in answer to the arguments of his friends he does not lose sight of God, and over and over again expresses confidence in the unseen One, as in that matchless utterance, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust." (Chapter xiii: 15.)

Unmanned by the presence of his friends he curses the day of his birth. The chapter, and in fact all the chapters which follow, should be read in a good metrical version.

> "Perish the day when I was born to be,
> And the night which said a man-child is conceived.
> That day! may it be darkness;
> Let not God regard it from above,
> Neither let the light shine upon it.
> Let darkness stain it and the shade of death.
> Let densest clouds upon it settle down.
> Let gathering darkness fill it with alarm.
> That night — let gloom seize upon it.
> Let it not rejoice among the days of the year.
> Let it not come into the number of the months." *

Jeremiah, the great weeping prophet, also broke out in the midst of sorrow and treachery, in a similar lament, which reminds us of Job's words.

> "Cursed be the day wherein I was born.
> Let not the day in which my mother bare me be blessed.
> Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father,
> Saying, A man-child is born unto thee, making him glad.
> Wherefore came I forth out of the womb
> To see labour and sorrow,
> That my days should be consumed with shame?"

Such expressions are the failures of poor, frail man.

* We give this as a sample of a metrical version. As the full quotation of the text is beyond the compass of our work, we recommend to our readers the translation of the Old Testament made by John Nelson Darby. It is the best we know and all poetical sections are given in this metrical arrangement. It may be secured through the Publication Office of *Our Hope*.

And He who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are but dust, is like a father who pitieth His children. (Psalm ciii: 13–14.) Since Critics associate the sufferings of Job with the suffering Servant of the Lord in Isaiah's great prediction (Chapter liii), we also can make this application, but not as meaning the nation, but our Lord Jesus Christ. What are Job's sufferings in comparison with the sufferings of our Lord! Job sat upon an ash-heap, but the Son of God was nailed to the cross and then He was forsaken of God. Never did a murmur escape those blessed lips.*

Verses 10–23. He next wishes that he had died at the time of his birth and he looks upon death as a great relief and rest, saying: —

> "There the wicked cease from troubling
> And there the wearied are at rest."

We see from these expressions that his mind turned to death as the great emancipator. Moses and Elijah exhibit the same trend of thought and weakness; so did disappointed Jonah when he said, "It is better for me to die."

Weighed in the light of the New Testament all these expressions are found wanting. Death is not a friend whose visit is to be desired, but an enemy. The Hope of God's people in affliction and sorrow in the light of the Gospel is not relief by death, but the coming of the Lord. The promise of the New Testament, "We shall not all sleep but be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. xv: 52) is unknown in the Old Testament, for it is one of the mysteries hidden in former ages. Job's language is that of a man in despair; he seems to have quite forgotten the bright and blessed days of the past and fears a hopeless future.

* The correct translation of verse 8 is as follows:

> "Let those engaged in cursing days, curse this day;
> Who are ready to rouse Leviathan."

It voices heathen superstitions and myths.

Verses 24–26. In this final paragraph Job states the reasons for his lament and longing for death to release him. We quote the two last verses.

> "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me,
> And that which I was afraid of is come unto me.
> I was not careless, neither had I quietness
> Neither was I at rest; yet trouble came."

He evidently in the days of his prosperity feared that just such calamities might overtake him. He knew the testing times would come and had no quietness. But now as they have come and the three anticipated evils overwhelmed him he would be glad to find the grave.

The First Address of Eliphaz.

CHAPTERS IV AND V.

1. He rebukes Job (chapter iv: 1–5).
2. The Righteous are not cast off (verses 6–11).
3. An Awe-inspiring Vision (verses 12–21).
4. Experience and Exhortation (chapter v: 1–16).
5. Happy is the Man whom God correcteth (verses 17–27).

With this chapter the long and tedious controversy between Job and his three visitors begins. His pitiful lamentation brings forth the addresses of his friends. Eliphaz and Bildad speak thrice, each answered by Job, and Zophar twice with corresponding rebuttals by Job. Job delivers his last word, the lengthy speech of chapters xxvii–xxxi in which he gives a summary of what he contended for, namely, his own integrity, but the problem of his suffering remains unexplained.

The controversy is progressive. The thought which the three friends follow is that all suffering is the result of the justice of God and therefore punitive. For this principle they contend in a dogmatic way. As the controversy continues they become more harsh, suspicious and finally almost abusive. Job's answers are first marked by despair;

then hope enters in. In a measure he rises above his sufferings in answering his friends in a sharp way. He has the last word, but, as already stated, the mystery and problem of his suffering is not cleared up.

Eliphaz's address is first in the series of controversies in which each maintains the punitive character of suffering and each answer given by Job (Chapters vi–vii; ix–x; xii–xiv) is filled with despair reflecting the state of his mind. After these preliminary remarks we briefly examine each address and Job's answers.

Chapter IV, Verses 1–5. Eliphaz is the most dogmatic of the three friends and in his first address makes much of the greatness and justice of God. He had come to comfort; but little comfort could he bring to the afflicted one. He begins very politely. "If one replied to thee (to Job's lament) wouldst thou be grieved? But who can refrain from speaking?" But at once he stabs Job to the heart.

> "Behold thou hast instructed many
> And thou hast strengthened the weak hands
> Thy words have upholden him that was stumbling;
> And thou hast strengthened oft the feeble knees.
> But now it is come upon thee and what grief!
> Because it toucheth thee, thou art troubled.
> Hath not thy piety been thy confidence,
> And the perfection of thy ways thy hope?"

All this was of course perfectly true. But he did not understand what Job needed in his suffering. The words of Eliphaz, the wise man from Teman, must have acted upon Job like an application of an irritant to a bleeding wound. What Job needed was tender sympathy, a good Samaritan, to pour oil and to give him wine. But Eliphaz reveals in this at once the harshness of his nature, the lack of discernment between the suffering of the righteous and the wicked, and finally he develops into a false accuser.

Verses 7–11. Eliphaz had told Job he was a pious and righteous man (Verse 6). And now he tells him: "Remember I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent?

Or when were any righteous ones cut off?" Only those that plow iniquity and sow wickedness reap what they have sown. God makes such to perish in His wrath. They are cut off even if they were like strong lions. What dogmatic logic! Job, if thou art righteous and suffering thus, then God is destitute of all justice; but if God is Justice, then thou hast plowed iniquity and sown wickedness and all thy suffering is thine own harvest.

Verses 12–21. The words which follow, describing a vision which Eliphaz had, are so sublime that we must quote them.

> "Now a thing was brought secretly to me,
> Mine ear did catch a whispering thereof.
> In thoughts from visions of the night
> When deep sleep falleth upon men:
> Great fear came upon me, and trembling too,
> It made my very bones to shake.
> Then a spirit passed before my face;
> The hair of my flesh stood up —
> I stopped — but nothing could I then discern —
> I looked, and lo, I saw a form.
> Silence: and then I heard a voice —
> "Shall mortal man be more just than God?
> Shall a man be purer than his Maker?
> In His own servants He trusteth not,
> His angels He chargeth with folly.
> How much more then they that dwell in houses of clay
> Whose foundation is the dust,
> Who are crushed as the moth!
> From morning to evening are they smitten
> They perish utterly, without any regarding it.
> Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them?
> They die and without wisdom."

This vision describes the greatness and majesty of God and of course is again true. That it was a real vision cannot be doubted. Man's punity, utter nothingness is thus made known in this vision. But did this meet the need of afflicted Job? It could not explain the reason of Job's suffering. And something like this is suggested by these words — Job, you are just like other men before God;

your present experience of affliction testifies to this. You thought you were right with God and that he blessed and protected you, but as He is holy and just, your suffering shows, you are reaping the consequences of your sin, as others do.

Chapter V: 1–16. He gives Job next a bit of experience, which is very true indeed. But the insinuation is wrong. He reasons from experience that suffering is the lot of the wicked, and therefore Job must belong to that class. The advice he gives to Job is in full keeping with his dogmatic assertion.

> "For man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.
> But as for me I will seek unto God,
> And unto God commit my cause;
> Who doeth great things and unsearchable,
> Marvellous things without number."

But the advice, while good, is most subtle, for it is built upon wrong premises. He maintains his previous assertion that Job was an ungodly sinner, reaping what he had sown; with this in view he spoke these words.

Verses 17–27. The first address of Eliphaz closes with a marvellous climax of great beauty. These words are also spoken resting upon the same wrong premises, that Job had sinned, that he must seek God, but Job had not renounced God; he had not left Him. Otherwise this final utterance of Eliphaz tells out the gracious power of the Almighty in a most blessed way. Read these verses and get the help and comfort which they breathe.

Job's Answer.

CHAPTERS VI AND VII.

1. His Despair justified by the greatness of his Suffering (chapter vi: 1–7).
2. He requests to be cut off (verses 8–13).
3. He reproacheth his friends (verses 14–30).
4. The Misery of Life (chapter vii: 1–7).

5. Two Questions: Why does God deal with me thus? Why does He not pardon? (verses 8–21).

Chapter VI, Verses 1–7. He meets first of all the reproach and accusation of Eliphaz. (Chapter iv: 1–5.) Because his sufferings are so great his utterances are so desperately wild. If Eliphaz only would consider this he would find how enormous the pressure is "heavier than the sand of the seas" which weighs him down and he would have shown the sympathy and tenderness for which Job longed. And then the description of what his agony is:

> "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me
> The heat whereof my spirit drinketh up.
> God's terrors now against me are arrayed."

This inward suffering of his soul was even greater than the loathsome disease which covered his body. He felt that God's hand in holy anger was upon him and he knew not what he learned afterward, that all was love and compassion from God's side. Satan must have had a share and part in these increasing soul-agonies of Job. But has he not a perfect right to complain? The animals in God's creation do not complain without reason. If the wild ass has grass and the ox fodder, they utter no sound. Nor would he complain if all was well with him. But his afflictions are like loathsome meat, and should he not murmur and complain. It is all the language of despairing grief.

Verses 8–13. And now he returns to his great lamentation:

> "Oh that I might have my request;
> And that God would grant me the thing I long for!
> Even that it would please God to crush me;
> That He would let loose His hand, and cut me off!"

This is still greater despair. And that he looks upon as comfort; yea, he would exult in pain that spareth not. It would end his sufferings and then after death he need fear nothing. He was conscious that he was right with

God. "For I have not denied the words of the Holy One." Here is the first note of self-righteousness, of justifying himself, which later on becomes more pronounced in his answers.

Verses 14–30. The sympathetic kindness he expected from his friends had not come. Eliphaz's address gave the evidence of it.

> "E'en to th' afflicted, love is due from friends;
> E'en though the fear of God he might forsake.
> But my brethren have dealt deceitfully, like a brook
> Like streams whose flowing waters disappear,
> And are hidden by reason of the ice
> And of the snow, which, falling, covers them." *

He had been bitterly disappointed in his friends. Their silence first, their wailing, and the outward signs of deepest grief, had led him to hope for comfort from their lips. They were like water brooks promising an abundant supply of refreshing water in winter time when not needed. But —

> "What time it waxeth warm, they disappear
> When it is hot they vanish from their place.
> The travelling caravans by the way turn aside
> They go up into the waste, and perish."

Such were his friends. They were like dried up brooks in the summer's heat. He had not asked them to give.

> "Did I say, Give unto me?
> Or, Offer a present for me of your substance?
> Or, Deliver me from the Adversary's power?
> Or, Redeem me from the Oppressor's hand?

Nothing like this he had asked of their hands; all he craved was kind and tender sympathy. He urges them to teach him, to show him in what he has sinned, if he suffers for his sins. He urges them to look straight into his face and see if he is lying. He solemnly assures his friends of his innocence.

* Companion Bible Version.

If only Job had not looked to his friends but to Him whose goodness and mercy he knew so well, he would not have suffered such disappointment. And what a contrast with David's faith: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Chapter VII: 1–7. This section is one of great beauty, describing human existence and the misery connected with it, as it was so markedly in his own case.

> "As soon as I lie down to sleep, I say:
> How long till I arise, and night be gone?
> And I am full of tossings till the dawn.
> My flesh is clothed with worms, and clods of earth;
> My broken skin heals up, then runs afresh.
> Swifter than weaver's shuttle are my days,
> And they are spent without a gleam of hope."

It is the picture of despair. The dark shadow of the enemy who had so wrongfully accused him must have told him "without a gleam of hope" as if God had now forsaken him.

Verses 8–21. Why did God deal with him in this way? He thinks God must be his enemy and asks:

> "Am I a sea? or a monster of the deep;
> That Thou settest a watch over me?"

He had dreams too, not like the dreams of Eliphaz which reveal the Greatness of God, but dreams of terrifying visions, so that he loatheth his life.

> ". . . . . I would not live alway:
> Let me alone; for my days are vanity."

Poor, suffering, despairing Job! To think of Him whose love had been so fully demonstrated in the past, as his enemy and to pray to Him, "Let me alone," was indeed horrible despondency. And if he has sinned, why does not God pardon and take away his iniquity? But

this is not confession of sin. A different thing it is when finally he cries out, "Behold I am vile, I abhor myself."

Bildad's Address.

CHAPTER VIII.

1. How long, Job? 1-7.
2. Enquire of the former age. 8-10.
3. God's dealing with the Wicked and the Righteous. 11-22.

Verses 1-7. Bildad the Shuhite now speaks to Job. He is less dogmatic than Eliphaz, and less courteous, but more outspoken. He must have lost his patience listening to Job's reply. Especially does he resent what Job had said about God, the insinuations which had fallen from his lips. But we shall see he too follows the logic of Eliphaz, that God punishes Job for his sins. He starts in at once to rebuke Job for what he had said. How long, Job, wilt thou speak these things? How long shall the words of thy mouth be like a mighty wind? By the latter expression he insinuates that Job's speech was tempestuous like the wind, and as empty as the wind. He declares, what certainly is the truth, that God cannot be unrighteous. In this way Bildad called a decisive halt to the dangerous utterances Job had made, forced to it by Eliphaz's cold and dogmatic assertions. Job, inasmuch as he repudiated the accusation of being a sinner, and being punished for his sins, was rapidly approaching the verge of charging God with being unjust. Then Bildad deals a cruel blow to the man upon the ash-heap. He tries to illustrate the principle he defends, that God only punishes sinners, by the children of Job, that they sinned and were wicked and therefore God dealt with them in His righteousness. It has been freely rendered in this wise:

> "It may be thy sons 'gainst Him have sinned
> And He, through their rebellion, cut them off."

How that must have pained Job! Then he exhorts Job to seek God diligently and it would not be in vain. He has his "ifs." "If thou wouldest seek unto God"— and —"If thou wert pure and upright."

Verses 8–10. But he is a traditionalist. He appeals to the past. "For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and apply thyself to that which their fathers have searched out." We, in our generation, are but of yesterday, and know nothing. Zophar also appealed to the fathers.

Verses 11–22. And here we have the wisdom of Bildad as he learned it from the past. It is all true and sublimely stated; the wicked cannot prosper; their doom is certain. On the other hand God will not cast off the perfect man. But Job is in the place of one who is cast off; therefore he must belong to the wicked who do not prosper. This is hidden beneath Bildad's rhetoric. Yet beautiful are the closing sentences of his first address, the truth of which was fully acknowledged by Job in his reply.

> "But perfect men God never casts away
> Nor takes He evil-doers by the hand.
> Wait! Then one day He fills thy mouth
> With laughter and thy lips with joyous shouts.
> And they who hate thee shall be clothed with shame,
> And tents of wicked men exist no more."

Job Answers Bildad.

CHAPTERS IX AND X.

1. The Supremacy and Power of God. ix: 1–10.
2. How then can Job meet Him? 11-21.
3. He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. 22-24.
4. Confession of weakness and the need of a Daysman. 25-35.
5. Murmuring against God. Chapter x: 1–17.
6. Welcoming Death. 18-22.

Chapter IX, Verses 1–10. The final words of Bildad seemed to have had a momentary soothing effect upon Job.

Of a truth it is so. But here is the question, How can a man be just with God? And what a God He is! If a man contend in argument with Him, of a thousand things he could not answer one. Even if it is the wisest among men, and the strongest, who stood up against Him, he did not prosper. He moveth and overturneth mountains; He makes the earth to tremble, bids the Sun and it does not shine. He made the mighty constellations in the sky, Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades —

> "Who doeth mighty things works, past finding out,
> And wondrous things, in number infinite."

How then can a man be just with such a God of Power and Greatness?

Verses 11–21. And such a Being Job declares is for him inaccessible.

> "Behold. He passeth, but I see Him not,
> He sweepeth by, but is invisible.
> Lo, He doth seize; who then can hold Him back?
> Or who shall say to Him, What doest Thou?
> Should God at length His anger not avert,
> Helpers of Pride must stoop beneath His hand
> How then can I address and answer Him?
> Or choose my words in argument with Him?"

How can Job confront such a One? Should he attempt to justify himself, his own mouth and lips would instantly condemn him; and if he were to say, I am perfect and blameless, He would only prove his perverseness.

Verses 22–24. But the words which follow sound almost like the ravenings of a madman. He speaks out, but not in the fear of God. He assumes indifference and says that it is all the same to him, whether he is right or wrong, for God destroyeth the perfect and the wicked alike; in other words He is an unjust God. When the pestilential scourge marcheth through the land and slays suddenly, He but mocks at the innocent who are taken away. The earth is

given by Him into the hands of the wicked; injustice reigns everywhere. If God has not done all this, who then is it? Horrible words these which must have been whispered in his despairing soul by that Being who is as much the accuser of God to the Brethren, as the accuser of the Brethren before God.

Verses 25–35. Then he confesseth his impotence. His days are swiftly passing. He cannot clear himself. He expresses his fear that God will not hold him innocent; He will account him guilty. If then he is wicked all his labours are in vain. Whatever he does cannot change matters. Even if he bathed himself in water pure as snow, and washed his hands with soap, so as to be as clean as he never was before, yet God would surely plunge him into the ditch. All self-help, and self-improvement is in vain. But then a ray of light. He needs another to help him, to bring him in touch with God, to make him just with God. He calls for a Daysman, an Umpire, one that might lay His hand on God and on him, the sinner, so that the rod be taken from him and he be freed from fear. The Daysman we find later in this Book foreshadowed. But He has come; Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter X: 1–17. And now the darkest of all. Not so much is it the physical agony, the boils and running sores, torturing him, as it is the bitter consciousness that he is loosing hold on God, that he begins to look upon Him no longer as a loving friend, but as a harsh, unmovable tyrant. It is a death struggle through which he passeth. His soul is weary of his life and so he tells out the bitterness of his heart. What accusations are here! Bold language indeed for the creature of the dust, and such an afflicted creature as he was—"I will say unto God—Show me wherefore Thou contend with me." He charges God that he planned his calamity and destruction. (Verses 6–13.) It is as if Job confesseth in his blindness by his words that he is in the hands of an all-powerful, merciless Being, not a God of Love and Justice, but an enemy.

Verses 18–22. What then is the use of living? Oh, if he only had been carried from the womb to the grave!

Zophar's First Address.

CHAPTER XI.

1. Job's multitude of words rebuked. 1-6.
2. The Greatness and Omniscience of God. 7-12.
3. Job Repent and receive the Blessings. 13-20.

Verses 1–6. The third friend of Job is in every way the weakest. Speaking last he must have been the youngest of the three. He lacks the dignity of Eliphaz and the gentleness of Bildad, nor does he possess the depths of either. Evidently Job's speech has taxed his patience and irritated him.

"Should not thy mass of words be answered?
And a man so full of talk, should he be justified?
Can thy boastings make men hold their peace?
And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?
For thou sayest 'My Doctrine is pure
And I am clean in His eyes.'
But Oh that God might speak
And open His lips against thee.
That He would show thee the secrets of wisdom,
That is manifold in effectual working!
Know therefore that God exacts not more than thine iniquity deserveth."

One can almost feel the boisterous spirit in which this rebuke must have been delivered.

Verses 7–12. He now reminds Job of the greatness and omniscience of the God whom he accused. Could he by searching find out God or find out the Almighty unto perfection? "It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." But more than that He is an omniscient God, the searcher

of hearts. He knoweth vain men and seeth iniquity also. So far it all seems well.

Verses 13–20. So far all sounds well, but now he follows the same argument as his friends. He too believes that Job is a wicked man who has hidden iniquity, and that this must explain his affliction. So he turns exhorter and calls on him to repent. Set thine heart aright, he tells Job; stretch out thy hands towards Him. Put iniquity away, do not permit iniquity to be in thy tents! He talks as if he is very sure, more so than Eliphaz and Bildad, that Job is guilty of much sin. Then he draws a charming picture of the blessed results if Job confesses and repents. He would forget his misery "as waters that are passed away."

Everything is painted by him in the rosiest colors as if he knew what God would do for Job. The time did come when Job got richer blessings than those outlined by Zophar. And what Zophar said, "Yea, many shall make suit unto thee" (Marginal reading: Entreat thee), came actually true when Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had to humble themselves before this Servant of God. Zophar's final word is a warning of the fate of the wicked. It was meant for Job. The blunt, rough way of Zophar, who does not contribute anything new and fresh to the controversy, makes Job more confident that he is right and he gives a remarkable answer.

Job's Answer to Zophar.

CHAPTERS XII, XIII AND XIV.

1. His Sarcasm. Chapter xii: 1-6
2. He describes God's Power. 7-25.
3. He denounces his friends. xiii: 1-13.
4. He appeals to God. 14–28.
5. The brevity and trouble of life. Chap. xiv: 1-6.
6. A ray of light through hope of immortality. 7-22.

Chapter XII: 1–6. He answers not only Zophar but the

others as well. Before this Job had expressed his disappointment in them, rebuked them for their unkindness, and assailed as worthless their arguments, but now he treats them in a very sarcastic manner.

"No doubt but ye are the people
And wisdom shall die with you."

Was he then without any understanding or inferior to them? Do you think I am ignorant of the things you have spoken to me about? You mock me; I am nothing but a laughingstock. You as my neighbours come to me and say — he calls on God, that He should answer him. Yet I am the just, the perfect man; you make sport of me. You are at ease and treat the one who is down, overwhelmed by misfortune, with contempt. But remember:

"The tents of robbers prosper,
And they that provoke God are secure;
Abundance does He give unto them."

This is what Zophar had claimed in his address, that the wicked do not prosper. (See xi: 2, 14, 19, 20.) Robbers often prosper and those who are secure are often those who provoke God. Perhaps his friends with their prosperity might belong to that class.

Verses 7–25. This is also in answer to Zophar's argument. Zophar had spoken of the greatness of God. The wisdom which Zophar had tried to impress upon him is so elementary that the beasts themselves know something about it.

"But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee;
And the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee;
Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee;
And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.
Who knoweth not in all these,
That the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?
In whose hand is the soul of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind."

Job outstrips Zophar's speech in every way. He is ahead in the controversy. In Verses 12–13 Job seems to have Bildad's statement in mind (Chapter viii: 8–9), and he declares now that with God is wisdom and might; He hath counsel and understanding. But what follows, while true in itself, is but the one side of God's doings, and the darkest pessimism, such as suited his mind. God spoils counsellors, maketh judges fools, looseth the bonds of kings, leadeth priests away spoiled, overthroweth the mighty, pours contempt on princes; He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them.

"He taketh away the heart of the chiefs of the people in the earth,
And causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.
They grope in dark without light,
And He maketh them stagger like a drunken man."

It is a dreadful picture Job has drawn of God by the one-sided description of His greatness. Not a word of His Love and Mercy. It is in full keeping with his despairing heart.

Chapter XIII: 1–5. He had told in the previous words that he was not an ignorant man. What his wise friends had told him he understood perfectly; both nature and history had taught him the greatness of God which they had emphasized. What ye know, I know; I am not inferior to you. I am just as good as you are. What he desires is not to speak with them but to the Almighty; he wants to reason with God. The parallelism of verses 4 and 5 is interesting and has been rendered as follows:

"But as for ye, plastered with lies are ye,
Physicians of no value are ye all
Would ye but altogether hold your peace;
That, of itself, would show that ye are wise.'

Still stronger is his rebuke as found in verses 7–13. He warns them that their whole course is wrong. They are presumptuous in talking deceitfully for God. All this he speaks in self-defense, that he is innocent, and with it

the subtle accusation against God once more, that He is unjust. He also warns them that "He will surely reprove you" and this came true.

Verses 14–28. Then his words addressed to God Himself. He dares to approach Him. Knowing the greatness and awfulness of God, and perhaps conscious too of not having Him honoured as he should have done, he says, this would be the meaning of the rather difficult verse (14), come what may I take my life in my hand and risk it. The paraphrase of the Companion Bible expresses it correctly.

> "Aye, come what may, I willingly the risk will take; and put my life into my hand."

But at that moment when he makes this resolve his faith breaks through and he utters one of the sublimest words which ever came from human lips. "Yea, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." And thousands upon thousands have spoken it after him, thus honouring God with faith's sweetest song in the night.

He wants God to hear his speech diligently and have his declaration come into His ear. He expresses his hope that God would yet declare him just, that is justify him, then who will dare to contend with him? And then that pleading of his with so much pathos! Relieve me from the sufferings, withdraw thine hand far from me, which rests upon me; and let not thy terror make me afraid. Then call Thou, and I will answer. (Verses 20–22.) Or let me speak, he says, and answer Thou me. Then once more the right note, that note which finally must be sounded to the full in his wretched misery — "How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin." But it was only momentarily. He breaks out in fresh charges against God. His self-righteousness has blinded him so that he asks, "Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and holdest me for Thine enemy?" Horrible charges he brings against His Maker, the charges of injustice. (Verses 26–28.) He

wanted to listen to God, but He gives Him no chance to speak. When finally God speaks, Job is in the dust.

Chapter XIV: 1–6. A true picture he has drawn in these words of man's frailty. Besides this unclean, for, Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. He requests that he might be let alone " till he shall accomplish as an hireling his day."

Verses 7–22. There is hope for a tree, he declares, though cut down, but it may sprout again. " But man that dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? " He speaks of man " who lieth down and riseth not." That is the language of man apart from revelation. It is the expression of one who is in darkness and uncertainty. Frequently teachers of errors, like soul-sleep, the annihilation of the wicked, etc., in defense of their false teachings quote Job and the utterances of these friends as if these were true revelations from God, when their words are only the expressions of the human mind, and often false and misleading. What Job spoke and his friends is given in an unfailing inspired account, but revelation is a different matter altogether.

Then Job's desire is to be hidden in Sheol, until His wrath be past. " That Thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! " In this he expresseth the wish to believe that there is hope and that some one might give him the assurance about it —" If a man die, shall he live again? " But this ray of hope is only for a moment and once more he gives way to despair and continues his awful suspicions that God is his enemy. The first series of controversies are a complete failure. Job by justifying himself has dishonored God, and his friends by condemning him and not giving him the comfort he needed have sinned as well.

2. THE SECOND SERIES OF CONTROVERSIES.
Chapters XV–XXI.

Eliphaz's Second Address.

CHAPTER XV.

1. Tells Job that he is Self-condemned. 1-6.
2. Charges him with pride. 7–16.
3. The Wicked and their lot. 17-35.

Verses 1–6. His second address is not as lofty as his first. Job's language has evidently annoyed him very much. He characterizes his words as vain, unprofitable, which can do no good. He charges him with having cast off fear and having become one who restrained devotion before God. He tells Job that what he has spoken only confirms their views of him, that he is a wicked man and suffers justly for his sins.

> "Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I;
> Yea, thine own lips testify against thee."

Verses 7–16. Wrong as Eliphaz's rebuke is, he adds still another charge. He tells him he is filled with pride. What Job knows they know also. "What knowest thou, that we do not know? What understandeth thou, which is not in us?"

> "And why does Thine heart carry thee away?
> And why do thine eyes wink? (in pride)
> That thou shouldest turn thine anger against God
> And cause such words to issue from thy mouth."

Then, as he did in his first address, Eliphaz speaks once more of the holiness of God. "Behold He putteth no trust in His holy Ones. Yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight."

Verses 17–35. Here we have another description of

the wicked, their miserable lot and what is in store for them. What he said was meant to terrify Job. Every word must have cut deep into Job's miserable soul, for he knew with Eliphaz he was a wicked, impious man. We see that Eliphaz said nothing new. He re-stated the former argument.

Job's Reply to Eliphaz.

CHAPTERS XVI–XVII.

1. Miserable comforters are ye all. xvi: 1-5.
2. Oh God! Thou hast done it! 6-14.
3. Yet I look Thee! 15-22.
4. Trouble upon trouble; self-pity. Chapter xvii: 1-12.
5. Where is now my hope? 13-16.

Chapter XVI: 1–5. How masterfully he meets their wrong accusations and how he brings forth his suffering afresh, yet always with that horrible nightmare, God is not for me, but against me! Such things Eliphaz spoke, he had heard before. What are you anyway? Nothing but miserable comforters. If they were in the condition in which he is, he would also speak. "But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips should assuage your grief." I would never treat you as you treat me.

Verses 6–14. And now he charges God with being responsible for all. What does he say? "Thou hast made me desolate. . . . Thou hast laid fast hold on me. . . . He hath torn me in His wrath and persecuted me. . . . He has gnashed upon me with His teeth. . . . He hath delivered me to the ungodly." Remarkable is verse 10. "They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they gather themselves against me." This was done to another Sufferer, the Lord Jesus Christ. But He murmured not; He did not dishonour God as Job did, but glorified Him. It is interesting to make a contrast between these two suffer-

ers. It brings out the perfection and loveliness of our Saviour.

But in all these ravings, faith, which slumbers in his breast, asserts itself, and tries to awake. He says "my witness is in heaven, and He that voucheth for me is on high." Thus he clings to God. How beautiful this word suits us, who know Him who has gone on high and who voucheth for us there, needs hardly to be pointed out. But Job knew Him not as we know Him. Once more he desires that daysman. "O that one might plead for man with God, as a man pleadeth for His neighbour!"

Chapter XVII: 1–12. What a pathetic description of his troubles! And he cannot deliver himself from the obsession that God is the author of it all.

Verses 13–16. And what is his hope now? How dark and evil his thoughts! The grave is to be his house, the darkness his bed. Corruption, his father, the worm his mother and his sister. He and his hope will go down to the bars of the pit, and rest together in the dust. But we shall soon hear another confession from his lips.

Bildad's Second Address.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1. New Reproaches. 1–4.
2. Once again, the Wicked and what they deserve. 5–21.

Verses 1–4. Bildad has the good sense in this second oration to be very brief. He, like Eliphaz, pays his compliments to Job and reproaches him. How long are you going to speak yet any way! You, you tell us that we are like the beasts, stupid and ignorant! Keep on with your nonsense you but tear yourself in your anger; it is all unavailing and not changes things for thee. This is the meaning of his rebuke.

Verses 5–21. Then the favored theme, the wicked and what is in store for them. Apart from the falsity of the application of all Bildad says to Job, his words are cer-

tainly true and very poetic. Thus he speaks of the wicked and his fate:

> "Terrors make him afraid on every side,
> And chase him at his footsteps.
> Through pangs of hunger his strength declines,
> Calamity ever stands ready at his side,
> The members of his body to consume,
> Yea, Death's Firstborn his members shall destroy.
> His confidence be rooted out of his tent,
> It shall lead him away to the king of terrors.
> They that are none of his shall dwell in his tent,
> And upon it brimstone shall descend."

All his words, though true, were consummated cruelty. It must have been torture and agony unspeakable for suffering Job to hear himself thus portrayed as the wicked man, whose lot is well deserved.

Job's Reply to Bildad.

CHAPTER XIX.

1. How long will ye vex my soul? 1-6.
2. And I am not heard! 7-12.
3. Forsaken of men he pleads to be pitied. 13-24.
4. Faith Supreme. 25-27.
5. The Warning to his friends.

Verses 1–6. Bildad's scathing speech did not bring him into the dust. He acknowledges the words vexed his soul and broke him in pieces, but he does not change his view-point. He repudiates the guilt with which they charged him and continues to blame God.

Verses 7–12. Afresh he breaks forth in accusing God. He charges Him with not answering his prayers. "He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath broken me down on every side, and I am gone." He imagines that His wrath is kindled against him. But what a display of divine Mercy and Patience!

God looked upon the worm in the dust and pities him, as He still pities His children.

Verses 13–24. Then the description of his forsaken condition. Read it in these verses. His brethren, his kinsfolks, his wife, all have turned against him. His servants look upon him as an outcast. Young children even despise him. Then the wail for pity: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O, ye my friends."

Verses 25–27. But what a change! Suddenly light breaks in. He does not speak by himself, but the Spirit of God enlightens his soul and utters words which stand in striking contrast with all the previous wailings. The witness he bears is not without difficulties in point of translation. Darby's translation is as follows:

> "And as for me, I know that my Redeemer liveth
> And at the Last, He shall stand upon the earth;
> And if after my skin this shall be destroyed
> Yet from out of my flesh I shall see God.
> Whom I shall see for myself
> And mine eyes shall behold and not another:—
> Though mine eyes be consumed within me."

The Companion Bible paraphraseth the text in an excellent way:

> "I know that my Redeemer ever liveth,
> And in the latter day on earth shall stand;
> And after worms this body have consumed,
> Yet in my flesh I shall Eloah (God) see,
> Whom I, e'en I, shall see upon my side,
> Mine eyes shall see Him — stranger now no more:
> For this my inmost soul with longing waits."

And the Redeemer of whom he speaks, enabled to utter these words of faith by the power of another, is the Lord Jesus Christ, the risen, living, coming Redeemer, the victor over death and the grave. Here is the testimony of the Book of Job to the Hope of the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the body and the glorification of the Saints.

Verses 28–29. How astonished his friends must have been at this wonderful outburst from his lips, which but a few moments ago almost blasphemed God. He asks them why they persecute him, inasmuch as the root of true faith is in him. He warns them that there is judgment.

The Second Address of Zophar.

CHAPTER XX.

1. Zophar's swift reply. 1–3.
2. Another Description of the life and fate of the Wicked. 4–29.

Verses 1–3. Zophar, the twitterer, begins his reply to Job with impatient haste. Job's words, probably those found in Chapter xix: 2, 3, and the last two verses, have made him angry. He boils over with indignation. He is ready now to confirm the testimony already given and wound the suffering servant of God still more.

Verses 4–29. He follows the same path and there is again nothing new in his argument. The description of the wicked is great; no fault can be found with what he says about those who are ungodly. The triumphing of the wicked, and the joy of the ungodly is for a moment only. He is bound to perish swiftly; like a dream, like a vision he vanisheth away. His children remain poverty stricken. He may swallow down riches, but he vomits them up again. And so he continues in his portrayal of the ungodly. Wrath is finally coming upon him. Such is the portion of the wicked man from God. But the serious mistake Zophar made is twofold. Job had pleaded for pity. Not a word of pity comes from Zophar's lips. The whole address is meant to tell Job "Thou art that man!" And the second mistake, he does not consider for a moment Job's utterance which could not come from the lips of an ungodly person, but from one who knows God.

Job's Reply.

CHAPTER XXI.

1. Hear my solemn words — then mock on. 1–6.
2. His Testimony concerning the Experiences of the Wicked. 7–26.
3. Your answers are nothing but falsehoods. 27–34.

Verses 1–6. This answer shows that Job gets the upper hand over his accusing friends in this controversy. In a masterly way he meets their arguments. He wants them to hear diligently, and if they choose, after he has spoken, they may mock on. He is not complaining to man, or making his appeal to these human friends. He begins to look for another helper, even to God.

Verses 7–26. Zophar's eloquent words concerning the wicked are taken up by Job and he proves that experience shows another side besides the one Zophar had made so prominent. The wicked often live to a ripe old age and possess great power. They have large families and their houses are safe from fear; nor is the chastening hand of God upon them. They prosper and all goes well with them; their cattle increase. They sing to the timbrel and to the harp and rejoice at the sound of the pipe. They love pleasure and have a good time. Then suddenly Job changeth the description. They spend their days in prosperity — but in a moment they go down to Sheol. It reminds us of Asaph's great Psalm (lxxiii) in which he describes the prosperity of the wicked: "When I thought to know this it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; Thou castedst them down to destruction."

Job declares they reject and defy God; they laugh at the thought of praying to Him. Then he gives his own, personal testimony "the counsel of the wicked is far from me." In this he shows his friends that they are wrong in

classing him with the wicked. Then he continues in unfolding the problem of the wicked and how God deals with them.

Verses 27–34. Without enlarging upon the final statements of his answer, we only remark that Job shows that his friends have not only failed to convince him, but their answers are insincere and nothing but falsehoods. The victory is on his side; yet the problem, "why do the righteous suffer and how can their suffering be harmonized with a righteous God," remains as unsolved as before.

3. THE THIRD SERIES OF CONTROVERSIES.

Chapters XXII–XXXI.

The Third Address of Eliphaz.

CHAPTER XXII.

1. Is not thy wickedness great? 1-6.
2. In what Job had sinned. 6-11.
3. The Omniscience of God and the Ways of the Wicked. 12-20.
4. Eliphaz's Exhortation and Promise. 21-30.

Verses 1–5. The third cycle of addresses begins again with Eliphaz, the wise man from Teman. He tries to maintain his dignity and lofty conception, but he proves too well that Job's accusation of insincerity is too well founded. He starts out with reminding Job of the Majesty of God. Can then a man be profitable to God? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty when thou art righteous? Or does He gain anything by it if thou art perfect in thy ways? Since then God has no interest in man's righteousness, and He cannot punish Job for his righteousness, he draws the conclusion that Job is a great sinner. Is not thy wickedness great? Neither is there an end to thine iniquities.

Verses 6–11. And now having made the assertion, according to his logical conclusions, he attempts to show that Job not alone must have sinned, but in what his sin consists. He charges him with avarice, with cruelty, with dealing in a heartless way with widows and with the fatherless. Then he tells Job that is "why these snares are around thee and thou art covered with darkness and with the waters of affliction." The astonishing thing is that every word of what Eliphaz says is a lying invention. Job later gives the most positive proof that all was a concoction of falsehoods. The Word of the Lord concerning Job shows up Eliphaz as a miserable liar, for the Lord had said concerning Job, "there is none like him in

the earth, a perfect and an upright man." Would the Lord have spoken thus if Job had outraged the laws of humanitarianism and withheld water and bread from the destitute or stripped the naked of their clothing? But how could Eliphaz ever stoop so low? It was but the result of his iniquitous logic. Job must be a sinner; he is a wicked man and without any real facts he draws his conclusions that Job must have done these things and charges him positively with it. The same fatal logic is still with us. Evil, for instance, comes upon a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ; he passeth through affliction, sorrow upon sorrow comes upon him, then someone suggests that his life must be wrong and the slanderous tongue soon charges some specific evil.

Verses 12–20. Eliphaz speaks next of God's Omniscience and then again brings in the favoured theme of himself and his friends, the wicked and their defiance of God. Then in self-righteousness he declares —"But the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Strange it is this word which came from Job's lips first (Chapter xix: 16). Evidently Eliphaz repeats this phrase to mock and to insult Job.

Verses 21–30. Once more as before he turns exhorter. Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee. He gives him instruction what he is to do, and what God will do for him if he acts upon his advice. But while the exhortations are all proper, they are altogether out of place with Job. For if Job acted upon this advice and would repent according to Eliphaz's demand he would by doing so assent to the false and lying accusations of his three friends. He would acknowledge himself the wicked man they had made him out to be. What he says as to restoration is almost prophetic of what should come to Job in blessing at the close of his trial.

Job's Reply.

CHAPTERS XXIII AND XXIV.

1. O that I knew where I may find Him. 1-8.
2. Trusting yet Doubting. 10-17.
3. Hath God failed? Chapter xxiv: 1-12.
4. Job's further testimony as to the Wicked. 13-25.

Chapter XXIII: 1–9. Job here does not disprove at once the false charges of Eliphaz. He can afford to wait till later, till their mouths are completely silenced. Then he speaks the final word. He acknowledgeth that he is still rebellious. His hand which is upon him is heavier than all his groanings. Then that outburst which reveals the longing of his tried and tempest tossed soul — "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come to His seat! I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." Then in blinded self-righteousness he speaks a bold word: "I would know the words He would answer to me, and understand what He would say to me." He is so sure of it all that he declares "He would give heed to me." How different it was when the Lord did speak and Job's lips are sealed, only to open in expression of deepest self-abhorrence. Yet even in the words he speaks here, still in the dark as to the reason of his suffering, he demonstrates that he is not the defiant wicked man, but one who longs for God.

Verses 10–17. Trusting yet Doubting expresseth the sentiment of what he says next. Trust is expressed in the beautiful utterance, "But He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." Yet it is self-vindication which speaks next, not in God's presence, but to clear himself before his friends. "My foot held fast to his steps." Doubt follows for he still considers God, not his friend, but his enemy.

Chapter XXIV: 1–12. The rendering of the opening verse is difficult to make. It has been paraphrased in this

wise: "Since, then, events from the Almighty are not hid, why do not they who love Him know His ways?" This perhaps expresseth the true meaning of his thought. He shows what so often happens on the earth and which seemingly indicates a failure of God in His righteous government. Why is it all? And never before in the history of the race has Job's charge of the failure of God been so prominent as in our evil days.

"From city and from houses groans ascend;
With shrieks those being murdered cry for help
Yet God regards not this enormity."

Verses 13–25. He describes the paths of the wicked again and yet they seem to escape the retribution in this life which they so well deserve. They even have security. And Job still is haunted by the thought that in these facts there is found an evidence that God is favorable to them. Death surely comes to them "yet a little while and they are gone" but what comes after death he does not mention. Then boldly he raiseth himself up and says, "And if it be not so now, who will prove me a liar, and make my speech of no account?" What an assertion that all he declared is infallibly true!

The Third Address of Bildad.

CHAPTER XXV.

1. What God is. 1-3.
2. What man is. 4-6.

Verses 1–3. Bildad's arguments are exhausted. He has reached the end of his resources and Zophar does not open his lips again. Nevertheless Bildad's final word is of great force and beauty, with deep meaning. He gives a picture of what God is.

"With Him dominion is reverence;
He maketh Peace in His high places.

The number of His hosts who can count?
And upon whom doth not His light arise?

How pregnant with meaning these four sentences!

Verses 4–6. And what is Man, man the creature of the dust, the earthworm.

"How then can man be just with God?
Or he be pure who is of woman born?
Behold for Him the Moon hath no brightness,
And even the stars are not pure in His sight.
How much less man, that is but a worm!
Or any mortal man — nothing but a worm!"

Job's Reply.

CHAPTER XXVI.

1. A sarcastic beginning. 1-4.
2. Job also knows and can speak of the Greatness of GOD. 5-14.

Verses 1–4. You have helped me greatly, Bildad, me, who am without power. Whom does thou instruct anyway? And what kind of a spirit is it which speaks through thee? In other words he means to say, I have no more use for your argument at all.

Verses 5–14. But let me, Bildad, tell you something about the greatness of God before which your words pale into nothing. And so he utters a description of God's greatness which is indeed greater than Bildad's. And after this sublime unfolding of God's greatness and power, he truthfully says:

"Lo these are but the outlines of His ways
A whisper only do we hear of Him
But who can comprehend the thunder of His Power?"

JOB'S CLOSING WORDS IN SELF-VINDICATION. Chapters XXVII–XXXI.

CHAPTER XXVII.

1. My Righteousness I hold Fast. 1-6.
2. The Contrast between himself and the Wicked. 7-23.

Verses 1–6. Zophar, the third friend, no longer speaks. Perhaps Job paused after his remarks in answer to Bildad and waited for Zophar's criticism. Perhaps that young hot-head hid his inability of advancing another argument under an assumed disgust. Critics have assigned verses 7–10 and 13–23 to Zophar and claim that Job did not speak them at all. But other Critics, like Wellhausen, Kuenen and Dillman say that these verses are a later insertion. We do not need to waste our time by examining these claims of the inventive genius of these scholars. There is nothing to them. Job now becomes bolder, knowing that his friends had spent their last arrow against him. He still accuseth God that He has taken away his right and wronged him. And he is determined, more so than ever before, not to give in to the abominable logic of his friends. "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart does not condemn me as long as I live." It is the vindication of himself.

Verses 7–23. And this self-vindication he pursues when he pictures the godless and contrasts them with himself, showing that he cannot be identified with these. How could this description of the godless ever be applied to himself? True, he had suffered like the wicked suffer, but will his end be like theirs? Thus he tries to show them that they had done him an injustice, for he was an upright man, who in spite of his misery held on to God.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. The treasures of the Earth. 1-6.
2. The better treasures. 7-22.
3. God knoweth the way and the true Wisdom. 23-28.

Verses 1–6. This part of the monologue of Job does not seem to have much relation, if any, to the controversial matter of the previous chapters. He speaks first of the treasures of the earth, the riches which man seeks after, but which do not last, and are so often man's undoing. Job shows that he had a good knowledge of mining operations. He knows of veins of silver and how gold is refined. Iron is taken out of the earth and copper molten out of stone. Then he describes how the miner with his mining lamp makes an end to the darkness when he digs into the mountains and then he sinks a shaft. They are so far down that the foot which passeth above them knows nothing where they are. The dangers of mining he also mentions—"they hang (suspended by ropes) afar from men, they swing to and fro." All this man does, risking life and comfort, to get gold and the treasures of the earth.

Verses 7–22. But there are better treasures, truer riches than these. Job evidently aims at a contrast with what man seeks in earthly things and the better things which are for him. There is a better way than digging into the earth for gold and precious stones.

> "There is a path no bird of prey has ever known,
> Nor has the eagle's eye discovered it.
> A path which no proud beast hath ever trod;
> Not e'en the lion ever passed that way."

But these paths are not for finding treasures of the earth; and so there is another way to get other riches, far better than silver and gold. Then he speaks again of what man does to bring hidden things to light, how he lays his hand on the flinty rock and overturns the mountains in his mining operations, stemming the subterranean waters,

and all to bring the hidden treasures to light. Then he asks: "But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?" Alas! man does not know the price of wisdom; it is not found in the deep, nor in the sea. Gold cannot buy it, nor silver. The price of wisdom is above rubies, the gold of Ophir, the precious Onyx (beryl) or the sapphire. "Whence then cometh wisdom?"

Verses 23–28. Here is the answer: "God understandeth the way thereof. Yea, in all His creation, He knows the way and much more so in redemption He is in the person of His blessed son, the Way to Himself, and in Him all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge are hid." Then comes the revelation of true wisdom: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." God has spoken to his heart and answered the question concerning wisdom and understanding. And ere long Job himself will demonstrate in his experience the meaning of this verse. In reverence and fear he then turns to Him, bowing in the dust; from evil, yea, from himself he turns, departs and finds the true wisdom and understanding.

CHAPTER XXIX.

1. His Past prosperity and honors. 1–10.
2. The good works he did. 11–25.

Verses 1–10. The words spoken by Job were wholesome words, showing that his mind was moving in another channel, but now he reverts to the old complaint in self-occupation, self-pity and self-vindication. What a horrible thing this old self! And before the sun can scatter his dark night, that self must be laid into the dust of self-abhorrence. And so we hear him review the past. Some 20 times he says "I" in this chapter. It reminds one of the man in Romans vii with his "I." Retrospect is good if it is done with praise and in humility. Not once does

Job utter a word of praise. It is all spoken to remind his friends, as well as himself, what a great man he was. How often it is with the Lord's servants, that they live in the past and then nourish a most subtle pride.

Verses 11–25. What a prominent place he used to occupy and the good works he did! The words need no further comment; what he means is on the surface. He glories in his good character and in his good works. Self is triumphant. His friends well knew that every word he spoke of his past greatness was true and not a lie.

CHAPTER XXX.

1. His Present Humiliation and Shame. 1–19.
2. No answer from God; completely forsaken. 20–31.

Verses 1–19. He had spoken of his past greatness and now he describes his present misery. Ah! the bitterness of it – those younger than I have me in derision! Alas! through it all we hear nothing but pride. He scorns those who were so much beneath him. And those who were scourged out of the land, these children of fools and base men, mock him, the former prince among men. "I am become their song; I am a byword to them; they abhor me; they spit in my face." Then he describes his affliction. "Days of affliction have taken hold upon me — the pains that gnaw me take no rest." He is in the mire and has become like dust and ashes.

Verses 20–31. He brings in God again. Thou dost not answer me! Heaven had been silent to all his pleas. What a dreadful charge: "Thou art turned to be cruel to me; with the might of thy hand Thou persecutest me"! He thinks himself completely forsaken, not knowing that God's thoughts towards him were thoughts of love and peace. His skin is black, he says, his bones are burned with heat. No joy for him, nothing but weeping.

CHAPTER XXXI.

1. My Chastity and Righteousness (verses 1–12).
2. My Philanthropy (verses 13–23).
3. My Integrity and Hospitality (verses 24–34).
4. Let God and Man disprove me (verses 35–40).

Verses 1–12. His final word is the final word in his self-righteous vindication. He gives Eliphaz the lie. He gives a review of his life to prove that he is clean in the sight of God and of man. Even if after this outburst his friends would have an inclination to answer him they could not have done so. He silenced them for good. But what are his declarations after all? Nothing else but the filthy rags of his own righteousness, the vain boastings of a good, moral man, such as we hear on all sides. He shows that in his character he was morally pure. The gross sins of the flesh he had avoided. He had even abstained from a look which might stir his passion. He knew that God watched him and therefore the sin of adultery was shunned by him; he did not sin against a neighbour's wife. If he had ever done that, then let the sanctity of his home and his own wife be violated. Then he enumerates his great philanthropy. He had respect of the widow; he shared his bread with orphans; those who were naked he had clothed.

Verses 24–34. He was not a worshipper of gold, a covetous man, nor had he worshipped like others about him, the sun and the moon, or what sun-worshippers did, kissing the hand and wafting it towards the sun. He was a hospitable, a kind hearted man; nor did he cover his transgressions as Adam did, nor did he hide his iniquity in his bosom. His was a walk in integrity.

Verses 35–40. "Lo, here is my signature, let the Almighty answer." I sign my name to all I have said; I swear to it. Let mine enemies also bring forth his accusations and sign them also. He challengeth God and Man. And even to the land he appeals that all his trans-

actions were just. Job's words are ended. One feels like saying, "Thank God!"

His final word may be condensed in one sentence: "I am clean." The next time he speaks and opens his lips, he says, "Behold I am vile." How he came to this the rest of the book will teach us.

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF ELIHU.

Chapters XXXII–XXXVII.

If the Book of Job were now ended the last word would be Job's. Furthermore the enigma of suffering would remain unexplained and God's character would stand impeached. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar ceased answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes. But suddenly another appears on the scene. Nothing is said how he came to be there; yet he must have listened to the controversy, for he sizeth up the whole situation and boils down the whole matter in a few terse statements. Critics and most expositors have spoken rather slightingly of Elihu. We heard some years ago a prominent Bible teacher speak of him as "a young theologian who has just been ordained and who thinks he has a lot of knowledge." Others call him "a conceited young philosopher" and that his babbling should be treated with silent contempt. Such statements only prove that the men who make them have not gone deep into the meaning of this book and that they lack in spiritual discernment. Just such a one, sent by God, is needed to exercise a mediatorial function and to prepare the way for the Lord Himself to come upon the scene. It is generally pointed out that God rebukes him in the words of Chapter xxxviii: 2. But God speaks to Job who applies it to himself. The vindication of Elihu from such criticism of man is found in the last chapter.

CHAPTERS XXXII–XXXIII: 1–7.

1. Elihu introduced (verses 1–5).
2. I waited, but now must speak (verses 6–22).
3. His address to Job (chapter xxxiii: 1–7).

Verses 1–5. As Elihu had listened to the different addresses his wrath was stirred up. His name is very

suggestive. Elihu means "My God is He"; Barachel — "the Blessed God"; the Buzite, "the rejected One" of Ram, and Ram means "Exalted." These are names which find their fullest application in the person of our Lord, whom Elihu in his mediatorial work represents. But why was his wrath kindled? Because Job justified himself rather than God and because Job's friends had found no solution of the problem, yet they condemned Job. This is indeed the result of the whole controversy in a nutshell. From the fourth verse we learn that he was a younger man; he maintained silence because they all were elder than he.

Verses 6–22. He tells them why he waited and did not speak before. He thought "days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom," so he was not a froward, conceited young man. But he acknowledges the spirit and that the inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding. Depending on that he must speak. He tells the three friends in plain words that they did not convince Job, nor did one of them answer his words. With Job, Elihu says he has no controversy and he does not intend to use the speeches of the three men. Verse 15 is a soliloquy in the third person, spoken by Elihu as he looked on the three men. Then he says that he must speak. He is filled with words and the mighty constraint of the spirit within him, makes him like wine which has no vent and is ready to burst like new bottles.

Chapter XXXIII: 1–7. The Chapter division here is unfortunate. The opening verses belong properly to the preceding chapter. What a difference between Elihu's words in addressing Job and the way the three other men had acted. He is calm, gentle and kind. He assures him that what he is going to say comes from the Almighty. Now, Job, if thou canst answer me, arrange thy words and stand up. "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead." We believe with this Elihu refers to Job's desire for a daysman. Now in the person of Elihu he has come. He encourages Job not to be afraid, for "I am

also formed of clay." How beautifully all this may be applied to the true Daysman, our Lord, we leave to the meditation of the reader.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1. Elihu rebukes Job (verses 8–13).
2. How God deals with man (verses 14–22).
3. How God in Grace recovers (verses 23–30).
4. Mark well Job, hearken unto me (verses 31–33).

Verses 8–13. Elihu treats Job in a dignified, yet firm manner. He speaks as one who is sure of the whole matter. He has heard Job's speeches; he knows the mistake Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar made, in treating Job as a suspicious character, a hypocrite and a godless man. No such wrong accusations are made by Elihu. He knows where Job's trouble lies and already spoke of it (xxxii: 2); it is his self-justification and pride stands behind it. But Elihu's zeal is for the honor of the name and character of God. What Job had said in charging God he must rebuke. He therefore quotes Job's utterances in his previous addresses. Without entering into a lengthy argument to disprove the charge of Job, or to explain the mystery of the sufferings Job underwent, he utters one masterly sentence. "Behold in this (his wrong charges against God) thou art not just. I will answer thee, *that God is greater than Man.*" Well spoken! God is greater than man, therefore His ways are past finding out, yet all must be perfect and righteous. And because God is God—"Why dost thou strive against Him? for He giveth not account of any matter of His."

Verses 14–22. But God, though He is greater than man, does not pass by man or ignore him. Elihu speaks of two different ways in which God deals with man. The first is in a vision of the night, in a dream. When there was no Bible, the revelation of God, God spoke to man individually by dreams and visions. He does not do so any longer for we have His completed Word in which His

will is made known unto us. The purpose of this way of dealing with man is to withdraw him from an evil way and to warn him so that he may leave the pride which man nourisheth in his bosom; to keep his soul from the pit and his life from perishing by the sword.

But there is another way in which God deals with man, the way of affliction and suffering. The description Elihu gives of a sufferer fits Job's case exactly. To understand this method of God in dealing with man there is need of a messenger from God, a mediator, one who comes in, a daysman to interpret the meaning of the affliction and God's object in it. It is not a common interpreter who can do this, but one of a thousand — yea, He is needed who is "the chiefest among ten thousand." This interpreter is to show unto man his uprightness. But whose uprightness, or righteousness, is meant? It has been translated by "to show unto man what is right for him"; and so most expositors explain that it means the interpreter tells the sufferer how to do right before God; and critics even suggest that the word "uprightness" should be changed to "fault." There is a deeper meaning here. The word "his" should be spelled with a capital "H"— not man's, but God's righteousness, the interpreting messenger is to show to the afflicted one. The following paraphrasic translation puts it in the right way:

> "Then, then, He speaks to him by Messenger
> Who can interpret; One 'mong thousands chief,
> Who will reveal to man HIS righteousness.
> Then He doth show him Grace (Divine and saith:)
> "Deliver him from going down to death;
> A Ransom I have found — Redemption's price."

In these words we have Him declared who is the revealer of God's Love and Righteousness, the Son of God, though His Name is not mentioned, yet He is the only One who reveals to sinful man His righteousness. He has paid redemption's price, He has made atonement and therefore He can deliver the sinner from going down to the pit.

Here we have the Gospel in the Book of Job. Then the blessed results. His flesh becomes as fresh as a young child; this is the new birth He prays to God as His redeemed child and He shows Him Grace and beholds His face with joy, even the face of a loving Father. This is the way God bestows upon man His righteousness through Him, His well beloved Son, who has found the ransom. He sings a new song. "I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not. He hath redeemed my soul from going into the pit, and my life shall behold the light."

Verse 31–33. After this glowing utterance in which Elihu brings in God in His Grace, he turns to Job. "Hast thou anything to say, then answer me." But Elihu waits in vain. Job's lips are sealed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1. Hear my words ye wise Men (verses 1–4).
2. The Refutation of Job's accusation of God (verses 5–30).
3. Job needs testing to the end (verses 31–37).

Verses 1–4. In beginning this part of the address, in which Elihu vindicates God's character against Job's insinuations, he addresses the friends of Job, and perhaps others also who were gathered there. He wants them to pay the closest attention to what he will say.

Verses 5–30. This is the main burden of his address; it is taken up with refuting Job's charge against God. He treats Job with all fairness and quotes what he said before. The wrong Job had done in his words is found in verses 5–9. Then Elihu brings forth the refutation that God is unjust. He shows that God is righteous. He is God and the Almighty and He cannot do that which is evil and unrighteous. If sin or wickedness were in Him He would not be God. His Creation bears witness to this. He sustains all in His goodness. Note verse 14 in its true rendering, "Should He set His heart upon Himself," what then would become of man? All flesh would then expire

and man would turn to dust again. But He does not set His heart upon Himself. Finally Elihu demonstrates the righteousness of God from His greatness and his Omniscience. His judgments also declare that He is righteous. (Verses 26–30.)

Verses 31–37. And Job has not yet learned the lesson; he needs more testings. Did ever a word like the following come from his sinful lips? "I have borne Chastisement, I will not offend any more." Has he asked in humility to be taught? Or has he said, "If I have done iniquity I will do it no more?" Alas! his spirit, in spite of all affliction, was still unbroken. "Would that Job were tried unto the end, because he answered like wicked men, for he addeth rebellion unto his sin, He clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God."

CHAPTER XXXV.

1. Remember the Greatness of God (verses 1–8).
2. Why God is silent and does not answer (verses 9–16).

Verses 1–8. Job having kept silence Elihu continues and asks him if this is sound judgment, what he had said, "My righteousness is greater than God's righteousness." This was the logical conclusion which Elihu drew from some of his words. Because God did not care for him the sufferer what profit was it to him if he had not sinned? Then Elihu answers and his friends as well by following Job's unjustly charge. He points out the Greatness of God and that cannot in any way be affected by what man does. That was Job's contention. Look at the heavens which are higher than the creature of the dust. If thou hast sinned by thy many sins, what canst thou do to Him? If thou are just, what givest thou to Him? Thy sin may hurt thee, and thy righteousness may profit thee; how canst thou claim that He has afflicted you in an unrighteous way? In all this Elihu had accommodated himself to Job's wrong reasoning.

Verses 9–16. Furthermore, Elihu shows that this rea-

soning of Job is utterly false. Job had contradicted himself. God takes notice of man. Then he gives the reasons why God does not answer the cry of the afflicted. It is not his indifference but Man's sin and forgetfulness of Him. None saith, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" The true reason is the evil doer's pride. God will in nowise hear vanity. Pride, vanity, self-will and all that goes with it makes it impossible for a righteous God to hear. And therefore Job's contention that it does not matter with God whether a man sins or is righteous is disproven.

CHAPTER XXXVI: 1-21.

1. God's care over the Godly (verses 1–7).
2. The purposes of Affliction (verses 8–18).
3. Job to consider this (verses 19–21).

Verses 1–7. Elihu had told Job in the last verse of the preceding chapter that he had opened his mouth in vanity and had multiplied words without knowledge. That should have explained to Job the reason why God did not answer. There could be no reply from Job and so Elihu continues. He is not through yet with speaking in behalf of God. Sublimely he stands up for God. "I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker." He tells Job, "One that is perfect in knowledge is with thee." How could he say this? Because Elihu knew in speaking for God His Spirit would speak through him to Job. All Job had said was wrong. Though God is mighty, yet does He not despise any. He does not preserve the life of the wicked, nor does He withdraw His eyes from the righteous. But the day is coming when God will reward the righteous.

> "He seateth them with kings upon the throne
> He makes them sit in glory; raised on high."

Beautiful Truth! It is a glimpse of the Gospel again, as expressed also in Hannah's song of Praise. (1 Samuel ii.)

Verses 8–18. But what about the afflictions of the righteous? Here Elihu speaking in God's behalf lifts the veil. He permits them to be bound in fetters and in sorrow's bonds, so that He, the righteous God, may show to them their deeds, to uncover their transgressions which have for its source that which God hates, pride (the crime of the Devil; 1 Tim. iii: 6). It is love and kindness, not his wrath and displeasure, which are revealed in the afflictions of the righteous. He wants to instruct them by suffering. And if they hearken and learn the lesson, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and end their earthly existence in peace and pleasantness. It was a call to Job to acknowledge this, it is a prophecy that ere long he would find it out, when God has accomplished His purpose with him, and his end would be peace and prosperity. The wicked do not heed this and therefore perish. Let any man refuse to hear Him and harden his heart against Him, they shall perish among the unclean. He would have led out Job in a broad place, but if Job continues in the argument of the wicked, reasoning and pleading as they do, charging God falsely, then let him beware. "Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke, then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." We dare not meddle with this verse as others have done. Let it stand as it is, this solemn truth! There is wrath and if man does not hearken to God His wrath in judgment will be displayed and the great ransom, not even the great ransom, can deliver.

Verses 19–21. These verses contain wholesome words of exhortation addressed to Job to take heed and not to regard iniquity.

CHAPTERS XXXVI: 22–XXXVII.

1. God's Power and Presence in Nature (chapter xxxvi: 22–33).
2. The Thunderstorm (xxxvii: 1–5).
3. The Snow and the Rain (verses 6–16 and Storms).
4. Elihu's Concluding Remarks (verses 17–24).

Chapter XXXVI: 22–33. The chapter division in the A. V. is at fault. These concluding verses of the thirty-sixth chapter begin the final section of Elihu's testimony. Unspeakably great in every way, in diction and reverence, is this man's witness to the ways of God in Creation's work. They show that he speaks not of himself, but the One who is perfect in knowledge speaks through him. God's power is displayed in nature and man should extol His work and gaze in wonder upon it.

"Lo! God is Great — greater than we can know;
The number of His years past finding out.
Tis He Who draweth up the vapour clouds,
And they distil from heaven in rain and mist,
E'en that which from the low'ring skies does fall,
And poureth down on man continually.
Can any man explain the rain-clouds balancings,
The rumbling thunders of His canopy?
Behold He spreadeth out His light thereon
While making dark the bottom of the sea.
Yet He His judgment executes by these;
By these He giveth food abundantly.
He graspeth in His hand the lightning flash
And giveth it commandment where to strike.
Of this the noise thereof quick notice gives
The frightened cattle warn of coming storm." *

How beautiful! It also proves the antiquity of the Book. In early days man knew the Creator by His works and was fully occupied with them. (Romans i: 20–21.)

Chapter XXXVII: 1–5. And now the Thunderstorm. His voice is heard in the thunder, His power displayed in the lightning and Elihu, in vivid description, trembles.

"He thundereth with His voice of Majesty
One cannot trace Him, though His voice be heard.
God's voice is wondrous when He thundereth.
Great things He doth; we comprehend them not."

And if He is so wonderful in nature, His ways there past finding out, how much more in His providential dealings.

* Companion Bible.

Yet whether in nature or in providence, His ways are perfect.

Verses 6–16. The description of God's perfect ways in nature are continued by Elihu. The snow and the rain, the hot blast of the summer, the biting frost of winter, the formation of ice by His breath and the storms, all is in His hands and controlled by Him. O Job! hearken, hearken! Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.

Verses 17–24. And now the concluding words of his great, God-given testimony. They are to impress Job and all of us with the frailty, the nothingness of man. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out; He is excellent in power; and in judgment and plenteous justice He will not afflict. Men do therefore fear Him; for none can know Him, be they ere so wise." This must be man's true attitude. This should have been Job's place before the Almighty. Surely the beautiful and powerful testimony of Elihu must have been a spiritual anæsthetic to Job. But more than that, it clears the way for the Almighty to speak.

V. THE LORD'S TESTIMONY TO JOB AND CONTROVERSY WITH HIM.

Chapters XXXVIII–XLI.

CHAPTER XXXVIII: 1–38.

1. The Lord speaks to Job (verses 1–3).
2. The Questions of the Lord (verses 4–38).

Verses 1–3. The voice of man is hushed; the voice of the Lord begins to speak. The Almighty, the Creator, the Lord of All comes now upon the scene. He too, like Elihu, had been the silent listener; He heard Job's complaint and wailing and the babblings of his friends. Elihu's wonderful utterance, inspired by the Lord, was ended. The Thunderstorm is on, no doubt a literal storm, the dark clouds gather —

> "Then from the North there comes a golden light.
> God appears in wondrous Majesty" (chapter xxxii: 22).

The golden light of God's own Presence and Glory overshadows the scene. Out of the whirlwind His own voice is heard. It is that voice which David in the "Thunderstorm-Psalm" (Psalm xxix) so wonderfully describes. The voice which is upon the waters — full of majesty, the voice which breaketh the cedars; the voice which divideth the flames of fire. When David thus extolled the voice of the Lord, he shows the demands of that voice. "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the Glory due unto His Name; worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness." And that voice, though terrible in majesty, will bring peace. "The Lord will bless His people with peace." What a scene it must have been there in the land of Uz, when the Voice of the Lord spoke out of the whirlwind! We can imagine how good Elihu stepped aside and covered his face. And Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, terror-

stricken, fell on their faces in the dust, while silent Job, awe-struck, dares not to look up. And what He speaks is for the one great purpose to humble Job, to bring him in the dust.

Job's last utterance was this: Oh, that the Almighty would answer me (xxx:35). He answers Him now. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" What a blunder expositors have made of speaking of Elihu's gentle words, and true words, as "a harsh judgment" and that God rebukes him in this verse. No; God does not rebuke Elihu who had exalted His Name and His works. He rebukes Job. He had darkened counsel by the multitude of his senseless words. God answers Job. He is going to ask him questions.

Verses 4–38. If we were to examine these questions minutely, which the compass of our work does not allow, we would have to write many pages. There are 40 questions which the Lord asks of Job, His creature, concerning His own works in creation. They relate to the earth and its foundations upon which all rests, the bounds of the sea —

> "When I decreed for it My Boundary
> And set its bars and doors and to it said,
> Thus far — no farther, Ocean, thou shalt come:
> And here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

He asks about the morning light and the unknown depths, the unexplored depths of the sea, with their hidden secrets, and the gates of death. He questions as to the elements, the treasuries of the snow, the storehouse of hail, the rain, the winds and the ice —

> "Whose is the womb whence cometh forth the Ice?
> And heaven's hoar-frost, who gave it its birth?
> As turned to stone, the waters hide themselves;
> The surface of the deep, congeal'd, coheres."

And what about the things above, the stars and their wonderful constellations?

"Canst thou bind fast the cluster Pleiades?
Or canst thou loosen great Orion's bands?
Canst thou lead forth the Zodiac's monthly signs?
Or canst thou guide Arcturus and his sons?"

And then the rain clouds, the lightnings and their control. What questions these are. They cover every department of what man terms "natural sciences"— geology, meteorology, geography, oceanography, astronomy, etc. Job had not a single answer to these questions and if he had spoken his words would have been folly. And we, 3000 years or more after, with all our boasted progress, scientific discoveries of the great laws of nature, are still unable to answer these questions in a satisfactory way. All the boastings of Science of getting at the secrets of Creation are nothing but foam. One breath of the Almighty and man's speculations, apart from Him and His Word, are scattered to the winds. But what is the aim of the Lord in putting these questions? To show that God is greater than man and to humble man, to bring Job to the needed true knowledge of himself and to deliver him from the pride of his heart.

CHAPTERS XXXVIII: 39–XXXIX.

1. The Beasts of Prey (chapter xxxviii: 39–41).
2. The Wild Goats, the Ass, the Unicorn and the Ostrich (chapter xxxix: 1–18).
3. The Horse, the Hawk and the Eagle (verses 19–30).

Chapter XXXVIII: 39–41. God's own wisdom and Power in Nature, as witnessed to by Himself, is followed by His witness as to the sustenance of His creatures, how mercifully He provides for their need. This section begins with the query, "Knowest thou?" Could he hunt the prey of the lion, or fill the ravenous appetite of their young? God considers the young, even so unclean a bird as the raven has its food provided by God. Wonderful it is to read that the young ravens in their helplessness cry to God. The beasts acknowledge the creator by their in-

stincts and look to Him for food, though it be not the sweet song of a lark, but only the croak of a raven. How it reminds us of the witness of the same Creator who speaks here, when He was clothed in creature's form. "Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls" (Luke xii:24). And striking it is that He begins by calling Job's attention to the wild Beasts first, though they are now man's enemy through man's sin. God in His infinite wisdom and benevolence cares for them.

Chapter XXXIX:1–18. Then what about the goats of the rock and their young? His omniscient eye beheld them out in the desert rocks and He watched over their young. Could He then not watch the footsteps of His higher creature, even His offspring, man? Then the wild ass, also a desert animal. He cannot be tamed. God made him so. The Unicorn (the Aurochs) with his strength is known to God also. He has the power to make him the willing slave; man cannot do it. And the Peacock with its goodly wings and the Ostrich, which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust. Who takes care of these hidden eggs, which the foot might crush and wild beasts break? It would be amusing, if it were not so sad, when Critics declare that the author of "the poem" made a mistake when he speaks of the eggs of the Ostrich. But it is not an "author" who speaks, but the Creator Himself and He knows more about His creatures than all the "scientists" in the world.

Verses 19–30. Next the description of the noble horse. Did Job give the war horse his strength or clothe the neck with the rustling mane, or make him leap like the locust? The picture of the war horse in battle is sublime also. God shows to Job a glimpse of His works, and the wisdom which has created them, as well as His care in keeping them. Such a God is He whom Job has maligned.

The hawk too may teach him a lesson. Is it by Job's instructions that the hawk soars high into the air, and is

it by his command that the eagle mounts and builds his nest in the dizzy heights, from where he spys his prey? No answer could Job give. His silence is assent. God is great and unsearchable and Job but the rebellious worm of the dust.

CHAPTER XL.

1. The Answer Demanded (verses 1–2).
2. Job's Answer (verses 3–5).
3. Jehovah's Appeal to Job (verses 6–14).
4. Behold Behemoth! (verses 15–24).

Verses 1–3. Now comes the direct word of Jehovah out of the storm-cloud to Job. He addresses him as "he that reproveth God." He had contended with the Almighty and now the Almighty Job had judged faces him and demands an answer. Let him answer.

Verses 3–5. And Job answers; and what an answer it is! It is the answer for which God was waiting. "Lo! I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." He acknowledges that he had spoken too much and that now he cannot answer and proceeds no further. He is completely silenced, acknowledges his own nothingness and vileness, that his words were wrong and that he has nothing else to say. He was convinced that such a God who had spoken to him of Creation and His creatures, making known His power, wisdom and care, could never be unjust in His dealings with man.

Verses 6–14. But Jehovah, the searcher of hearts, has not yet finished. Job's abominable pride must be laid bare. Jehovah asks him the serious question, "Wilt thou disannul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous? Hast thou an almighty arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a voice like His?" Then he tells him: "Deck thyself now with majesty and glory." Array thyself with majesty and power. Come and take my place and then thus arrayed let Job be in God's place, rule and deal with proud man and the evil-doers.

"Send far and wide thy overflowing wrath;
And on each proud one look, and bring him low;
Each proud one single out, and humble him;
Yea, crush the evildoers where they stand;
Hide them away together in the dust;
And in the deepest dungeon have them bound."

It is Divine irony, but needed in order to humble Job still more. He who was so proud and had so stubbornly defended his righteousness in self-justification and God-accusation, how could he do what Jehovah asked him to do?

But if he were to do it, then Jehovah would be ready to own to him "that thy right hand to save thee will suffice." It all strikes home to the proud, self-righteous heart of Job.

Verses 15–24. The Lord asks Job to consider the Behemoth; it is undoubtedly the Hippopotamus (the Greek for River-horse). A description of this powerful beast follows. He calls the Behemoth the "chief of the ways of God," one of His greatest works in animal creation. The Behemoth is one of Job's fellow-creatures "which I made as thee." He eateth grass like an ox. He has tremendous strength in his loins and legs. He takes its rest under the shady trees and fears nothing:

"Suppose the stream should swell, he will not blench
For he believes that Jordan he can drink.
Shall any take him while he lies on watch?
Or with a ring shall any pierce his nose?"

Behemoth then is a powerful, uncontrollable beast which lives for itself. How weak then is man as contrasted with this beast in possession of such marvellous strength. Yet it is only a beast and Job is a man. How abominable then must Job's pride and boasting appear in the sight of the Lord.

CHAPTER XLI.

1. Leviathan, the Untamable Beast of Power (verses 1–11).
2. Its Description (verses 12–24).
3. His Remarkable Strength (verses 25–34).

Verses 1–11. The Leviathan has generally been identified with the crocodile. Like the Behemoth, the Leviathan is a strong and untamable beast. Jehovah asks, Canst thou draw up Leviathan with hook? Canst thou pierce his jaw with a reed? Will he make a covenant with thee? Wilt thou take him for a servant forever? Then He declares that he is fierce, and even at the sight of him one is cast down. And if a creature is so mighty and strong what must the One be who called this creature into existence? Verses 10 and 11 should be rendered as follows: "Who then is able to stand before Me (the Creator) who did give to me first that I should repay him? since all beneath the heavens is mine."

Verses 12–24. A more detailed description of the Leviathan follows. His frame is strong; his outer garment, so invulnerable, who can strip it off? His teeth are terrible, who can open the doors of his face (his mouth)? His scales, his armour, are his pride. Here is a good description of the crocodile's hide. The scales are so near each other that no air can come between them; they are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. His sneezings flash forth light and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. The eyes of the crocodile are visible quite a distance under water. The Egyptians therefore used the crocodile's eye in the hieroglyphics for the dawn of the morning. The entire description shows what a terrible beast it is.

Verses 25–34. Then his great strength is unfolded. If one lay at him with the sword, it cannot avail. The dart, the spear and the pointed shaft make no impression upon him. He counteth iron as straw and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; clubs are counted as stubble. The final statement concerning Leviathan is "He is king over all the sons of pride."

This last word is significant —"He is King over all the sons of pride." It has a deeper meaning. In Isaiah xxvii: 1 we read: "In that day the Lord with His sore and strong sword shall punish Leviathan the piercing ser-

pent, even Leviathan the crooked serpent; and He shall slay the Dragon that is in the sea." Here Leviathan typifies the power of darkness. Both the Behemoth and the Leviathan typify Satan, his character and his rule. He is king over all the sons of pride. These two beasts are likewise a good description of the Beasts spoken of in Revelation, which at the end of this age will manifest their power and pride as Satan's masterpieces. And now the deduction which Job could easily make. If he is proud then he belongs to Leviathan the king who rules over the sons of pride. Jehovah has touched the secret in Job's bosom. He has searched out the depths of his heart. Pride, the Devil's crime, has been cherished by him. And now with the heart laid bare by Jehovah's dealing we shall hear Job's voice once more.

VI. THE CONFESSION OF JOB.

CHAPTER XLII: 1–6.

Critics claim that Job's answer is misplaced and that it really ought to be put in connection with chapter xli: 3–5. This is another evidence of the lack of spiritual discernment of these "great" scholars. They treat the Word of God as literature only and criticise it as such. We have seen that the additional words of Jehovah were needed to bring Job completely into the dust and bring from his lips the confession which alone could satisfy Jehovah and be the great blessing for himself. This confession we have now before us.

Then Job answered the Lord and said:
I know that Thou canst do all things,
And that no purpose of thine can be withstood.
Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?
Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not.
Hear I beseech Thee and I will speak;
I will demand of thee, and I will speak and declare Thou unto Me.
I heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth Thee,
Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent
In dust and ashes.

Here we have his full answer, his complete prostration before Jehovah. He acknowledgeth first Jehovah's supreme power. He is omnipotent and can do all things. Then he quotes Jehovah's own words (xxxviii: 3; xl: 2). Thou hast asked me, "Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?" It is strange that some expositors can misapply these words as if the Lord again rebuked Elihu. No, as we have shown before, He rebukes Job for his wild and audacious charges he had made against the Lord. And now Job acknowledgeth that Jehovah's rebuke is right. It is all true, he saith, I uttered things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, beyond

my ken. Hear me now, Jehovah, I will speak. Once more he quotes Jehovah's word. Thou hast said (chapter xl: 2), "I ask of thee, answer ME." Here then is my answer, he replies — I heard of Thee by hearing of the ear; but now mine eye hath seen Thee — this is my answer now — I abhor myself. In dust and ashes I repent.

Face to face with Jehovah, His power and His Holiness prostrate Job in the dust. No creature can stand and boast in His presence. His plea of innocence, of righteousness, of philanthropy and all the boastings of his former greatness is gone. He seeth himself stripped of all; he stands in Jehovah's presence in nakedness and shame. Nor does he say that he abhors now what his mouth hath spoken, but it is himself, his wicked, proud self, which he abhors. He has taken the place of greatness. Now Jehovah can come forth and lift him up and raise him to blessing and glory. This great scene corresponds with the vision of Isaiah when he beheld the Lord and cried out "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am of unclean lips." (Isaiah vi: 5.) And Daniel also! (Daniel x.) Peter on the Lake of Galilee was face to face with Him, who hath spoken to Job, the same and not another, and when he seeth His power and realizeth this is Jehovah, Peter falls at His feet and like Isaiah, Daniel and Job, acknowledges his nothingness. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

The enigma of the Book of Job is solved. God permitted the afflictions to come upon His servant Job, not only to manifest His power, but for Job's good, to draw him into the place of nearness and of blessing. And that place is the dust, "in dust and in ashes."

This is the place which all God's Saints must own. And blessed are we, beloved reader, if we follow the wooings of Grace, if we let His Spirit put us daily into that place, so that the Lord's hand may be prevented from putting us there by suffering and affliction.

VII. THE EPILOGUE. JOB'S RESTORATION AND BLESSING.

CHAPTER XLII: 7–17.

1. Jehovah's Message to Job's Friends (verses 7–9).
2. Job's Restoration (verses 10–15).
3. The Conclusion — Peace.

Verses 7–9. Like the beginning of the Book, the prologue, the epilogue is not in a poetic measure, but in prose. The Lord addresseth Eliphaz as the most prominent one of the three friends of Job. His wrath is kindled against the three. Though they had apparently stood up for Him and defended His character, yet under the searchlight of the Omniscient One, who searcheth the hearts of men, they are found wanting. The charges they had brought against his servant Job, were false. They had wickedly accused Job, whom He had declared to be "a perfect and an upright man." In all their charges they had slandered God. Then the Lord, said, "for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath." Here is a beautiful lesson. Job hath confessed and Jehovah hath forgiven. He forgets all Job's sinful utterances; He remembers them no more. But in infinite grace He takes the few sentences scattered throughout Job's speeches in which he honoured the Lord and expressed trust in Him and with these He is well pleased. It must have been a sweet music in Jehovah's ear when Job said, "Though He slay me yet will I trust." And so He acknowledgeth Job as His servant. They must bring sacrifices — a burnt-offering; and that blessedly shows us the Cross.

"And my Servant Job shall pray for you; for Him I will accept. . . ." Sweet scene now as Job prays for his humbled friends. How it again reminds us of Him, who ever liveth and maketh intercession for His people. Him God hath accepted in His great sacrificial Work on the Cross, and we are accepted in Him.

So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them; and the Lord accepted Job. This is the last as to Job's friends.

Verses 10–15. And now Job's restoration and double blessing. All his kinfolks return with all his acquaintances and sit down to a meal in sweet communion. What about his bodily disease? Nothing is said of that. But assuredly the Lord touched his suffering body, and He who spoke to the leper, must have spoken to Job, "Be thou clean," and the loathsome disease vanished, and as Elihu had said, his flesh became like that of a young child. They also brought him money and rings of gold. They were not presents to enrich him, the Lord did that for Job, but simply to show how happy they were over Job's healing and restoration.

All his wealth becomes twice as large as before. The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. While his possessions are doubled, his sons and daughters are not. He gives him also seven sons and three daughters. This does not mean, as some suppose, that they were not new sons and daughters, but that the restoration is that in resurrection. Such a view is untenable. The sons and daughters were born to him. The names of the three daughters are given. Jemimah (a dove); Keziah (Cassia); Keren-happuch (flashes of Glory). Such were the blessed results of Job's experience, expressed by these names. Purified and humble like the dove; Cassia, which is fragrance, worship and adoration; and the flashes and splendour of glory.

Verses 16–17. We have reached the end. It is an end of peace, a perfect day. Four generations he beholds and at the ripe old age of 140 years he is gathered to his fathers. In consulting the Septuagint version we find a long addition to the last verse which begins with this statement: "and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up." Then follows Job's genealogy. It is taken from some apocryphal writing but it

shows that the hope of the resurrection of the body was believed in ancient days. Surely Job will be there "in that day" and his great utterance, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and the hope of seeing Him will be realized.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (James v: 15.) And all His people know this matchless truth, that the Lord in all His dealings with His people "is very pitiful and of tender mercy." In our annotations we have pointed out repeatedly the comparison of Job in his sufferings with the Lord, our Saviour, and His holy sufferings in the sinner's place. It brings out the perfection of Him who is altogether lovely.

An application to Israel can also be made. If this is followed out it will prove of much interest. Israel, like Job, is suffering, self-righteous, but some day the nation will come face to face with Jehovah and be humbled in the dust. Then their restoration when they will receive double of the Lord's hand for all their sins. (Isaiah xl: 2.)

PSALMS

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The Psalms.

Introduction.

"Although all Scripture breatheth the grace of God, yet sweet beyond all others is the Book of Psalms." This is the ancient witness of Ambrose. And Luther said "You might rightly call the Psalter a Bible in miniature." Hundreds of similar testimonies could be added. The Psalms have always been one of the choicest portions of the Word of God for all Saints, Jewish and Christian. The ancient Jews used the Psalms in the Temple worship. The so-called "Great Hallel" consisting of Psalms cxiii–cxviii was sung during the celebration of Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. Daily in the Temple Psalms were sung in a prescribed order. The Jews still use them in all their feast days and in the synagogue.

The Psalms are mentioned in connection with praise in the New Testament (Col. iii:16; James v:13). The Church from the very start has used them in public and private devotion. All branches of Christendom use them today; Protestantism, Romish and Greek Catholicism make use of them in responsive reading or chanting. And even more so are they used and have always been used by individuals, because the heart finds in these songs and prayers, the different experiences of human life, and the different emotions. The sufferer steeped in sorrow finds in this book the experiences of suffering and sorrow; he finds more than that, encouragement to trust God and the assurance of deliverance. The penitent soul finds that which suits a broken and contrite heart. The lonely one, helpless and forsaken, reads of others who passed through the same experience. Then there is comfort, joy and peace, as well as hope. They stimulate faith and confidence in the Lord and are breathing a spirit of worship and praise which produce reverence and praise in the heart of the believer.

The Lord Jesus and the Psalms.

But there is another reason why believers love the Psalms. The Lord Jesus is not only revealed in this Book as nowhere else (as we shall show later) but He used the Psalms throughout His blessed life on earth and even in glory. Here are His own prayers prewritten by the Spirit of God. The expression of sorrow, loneliness, rejection and suffering describe what He passed through in His life of humiliation. The praise and worship, the trust and confidence in

God, express likewise prophetically that life of obedience and trust. We believe when He spent nights in prayer to pour out His heart before His Father, on the mountain or in the desert, He must have done so by using the Psalms. He used the Psalms speaking to His disciples; with Psalm cx He silenced His enemies. Gethsemane is mentioned in the Psalms; and in the suffering of the Cross He fulfilled all that the Psalms predict. In resurrection He used the xxii Psalm: "Go and tell My Brethren." He opened to His disciples the Scriptures "that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me" (Luke xxiv:44) as He had before told the two on the way to Emmaus "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures concerning Himself. When He ascended on high and took the seat at God's right hand, and God welcomed Him to sit down and to be the priest after the order of Melchisedec it was according to the Psalms. And in His messages from the throne in speaking to the churches He uses the Psalms (Rev. ii:27). And when He comes again the Hallelujah chorus of the ending of this Book will be sung by heaven and earth and all the predicted glory, as given in the Psalms, will come to pass. This Book then ought to be precious to us, because it was precious to Him and makes Him known to our hearts. The Spirit of God also quotes the Psalms more frequently in the Epistles than any other Old Testament book.

The Title of the Book.

Our English word Psalms is taken from the Greek word employed in the Septuagint translation—"*Psalmoi*"; this means "songs." It is also frequently called Psalter. This word is also Greek, from "Psalterion," a harp or any other stringed instrument.

The Hebrews call this Book "*Tehillim*," which means to make a joyful sound, or praises. It is in the Hebrew Bible in the third division, the "*Kethubim*" section. It is the great poetical Book of the O. T. We refer the reader to our remarks on Hebrew poetry in the introduction to the Book of Job. The poetry of the Psalms is of a lyric character. The real great beginning of lyric poetry is with King David. He was remarkably gifted and yet it was not natural gift which produced these wonderful utterances but it was the Spirit of God who tuned his harp. Our space is too valuable to pay much attention to the Critical School with their denials of the Davidic authorship of different Psalms, and that which is worse, the denial of the Messianic predictions of the Psalms. If these Critics were but seekers after the fine gold, the precious gems of truth and divine knowledge, so richly stored in this mine, they would cease criticising and become worshippers.

The Authorship of the Different Psalms.

Nearly one-half of the Psalms, seventy-three in all, were given by the Holy Spirit through the Shepherd King of Israel, David, who is rightly called the sweet singer of Israel.

The following are the *Davidic* Psalms: iii–ix; xi–xli (except Psalm xxxiii; li–lxx; lxxxvi; ci; ciii; cviii; cix; cx; cxxii; cxxiv; cxxxi; cxxxiii; cxxxviii–cxlv.

Asaph has twelve Psalms: Psalm l and Psalms lxxiii-lxxxiii.

The children of *Korah* composed eleven Psalms: Psalms xlii, xliv–xlix, lxxxiv, lxxxv, lxxxvii and lxxxviii.

One by *Heman the Ezrahite* Psalm lxxxviii, and one by *Ethan the Ezrahite* Psalm lxxxix; one by *Moses,* Psalm xc.

That makes 99 Psalms whose authors are known; the remaining 51 have no inscription.

The Collection and Arrangement of the Psalms in its Present Form.

From the foregoing paragraph we learn that the known authors of the Psalms are: David, Asaph, the Children of Korah, Moses, Heman and Ethan. If we take into consideration that other Psalms were written during the Exile we see that the authors are centuries apart. The people Israel possessed these Psalms in an uncollected form; they laid about loose, so to speak. Someone at some time collected them in a book, in the form we have them now.

Who did this valuable collecting and arranging of these Psalms we do not know for it is not revealed. But this we can say of certainty that the Hebrew Saint who did it was called to do it by the Spirit of God and the very arrangement of these Psalms in the Book as we have it now is the perfect work of the Holy Spirit.

Here we clash with the Critics who speak of "different editors arranging and re-arranging at different occasions." They claim, for instance, that the statement at the close of Psalm lxxii "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," shows that it is misplaced because other Davidic Psalms come later, and that probably this is the work of some editor, etc. But the phrase at the close of Psalm lxxii rather means something different, as we take it. The Seventy-second Psalm reveals the glories of the coming Kingdom of Him who is greater than Solomon, and David, getting a glimpse of it, declares "The prayers of David, my prayers are ended; I have nothing greater to ask, than what this Psalm reveals."

The work the unknown collector has done shows that it is the work of one person guided by the Spirit of God.

Let us suppose that we had in our possession a basket containing 150 precious stones, diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds and pearls and we went with this basket to some jeweler with the request to

arrange these gems in a necklace. How would he go about? Would he take out a stone at random and put it on a string and then take another, and another till he had strung them all? Certainly not. He would examine each stone. He would study the value of every emerald and sapphire, the brilliancy of each diamond and the lustre of every pearl. Then he would continue to study where each belongs on that chain so as to tell out its own value in relation to the other.

And here were 150 gems of greater value than earthly gems, gems of divine inspiration. They are to be arranged in perfect order so that each gem has the right place, to tell out its own story, in this book. Who else could do this but He who knows the value and meaning of these Psalms! The Spirit of God through His chosen instrument put these Psalms together and therefore we have in the arrangement a most wonderful, consecutive revelation. It is this knowledge which so many readers of the Psalms have missed. Generally one Psalm is read without considering that this Psalm stands in some relationship to the preceding one and to those which follow, that it is only a link in a chain. Just as Romans vi leads to Romans vii and Romans vii to Romans viii, so it is with the Psalms. And here we shall discover the divine wisdom. These Psalms come in clusters and must be treated as belonging together to get the real spiritual and especially prophetic message. We give the most simple illustration of this fact found in the book known to many readers of the Psalms: Psalm xxii is a prophecy of Christ in His suffering, or the good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. Psalm xxiii shows Him as the great Shepherd of the sheep and Psalm xxiv reveals Him as the coming, chief Shepherd in Glory. The many other most interesting inter-relation of Psalms the annotations will point out. Before we give the great message of the Book of Psalms we call attention to other matters of importance in the study of this remarkable Book.

The Hebrew Terms in Connection with the Psalms.

In many of the Psalms we find the beginning a Hebrew word. For instance in Psalm viii "To the Chief Musician upon the Gittith," or in Psalm xvi "Michtam of David." It is now a question whether these terms belong to the Psalm with which they are connected in our English Bibles, or to the preceding Psalm. When we read the last chapter of Habakkuk we find a psalmodic phrase at the close "To the chief singer upon Neginoth." Upon this the interesting theory has been advanced that the different titles in the Psalms are misplaced, that what is the superscription of the different Psalms should be the subscription of the preceding one. In other words, to give an illustration, the words standing at the beginning of Psalm viii "To the chief musician upon the Gittith," belongs to Psalm vii. Our work does not permit a minute examina-

tion of this.* Such a misplacement could of course easily happen when we remember that the Hebrew manuscripts were written without a break.

We give in alphabetical arrangement the Hebrew Titles and their English Meaning.

Aijeleth-Shahar. Psalm xxii. "The hind of the Dawn." The early light preceding the Dawn of the morning, whose first rays are likened to the shining horns of a hind. (Delitzsch)

Alamoth. It means "Concerning Maidens." It is found in the beginning of Psalm xlvi.

Al-Tashcheth. "Destroy not." In Psalms lvii–lix and in Psalm lxxv.

Gittith. "Winepresses." In Psalms vii, lxxx and lxxxiii.

Jeduthun. "Praise Giver." xxxix, lxii and lxxvii.

Mahalath. "Sickness." Delitzsch says on the meaning the following "Upon Mahalath signifies after a sad tone or manner, whether it be that Mahalath itself is a name for such an elegiac kind of melody, or that it was thereby designed to indicate the initial word of some popular song. So that we may regard 'Mahalath' as equivalent to piano or andante." This would correspond to Psalm liii where this word is found.

Mahalath Leannoth. It means "Sickness unto Humiliation." It stands connected with Psalm lxxxviii.

Maschil. "Instruction," found in Psalms xxxii, xlii, xliv, lii–lv, lxxiv, lxxviii, lxxxviii, lxxxix, cxlii.

Michtam. "Engraven." In Psalms xvi, lvi-lx.

Muth-Labben. "Death for the Son." It is found as the superscription of Psalm ix.

Neginoth. "Smitings," in Psalms iv, vi, liv, lv, lxi, lxvii and lxxvi.

Nehiloth. "Possessions," in Psalm v.

Sheminith. "The Eighth Division" or "upon the Octave," in Psalm vi and xii.

Shiggaion. "Loud Crying." Psalm vii.

Shoshannim. "Lilies," in Psalms xlv and lxix.

Shoshannim-Eduth. "Lilies of testimony." Psalm lxxx. Eduth (testimony) is found in Psalm lx.

The word **Selah** occurs 71 times in the Psalms. It means "To pause," with a secondary meaning to "lift up." We can take it as an indication that in reading we should pause, meditate and then lift up our hearts in praise and prayer.

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* Dr. J. W. Thirtle of England, to whom we are indebted for this suggestion, has written a volume on it. "The Titles of the Psalms." We recommend it to those who desire to follow it more closely.

The Alphabetical Psalms.

A number of the Psalms in the Hebrew are in an alphabetical arrangement, that is certain verses begin with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This arrangement is not always perfect. Psalms ix and x contain (the two together) the letters of the alphabet with several missing. Psalms xxv and xxxiv are also incomplete in the alphabetical scope. Psalm xxxvii has a perfect alphabetical character. Other alphabetical Psalms are Psalms cxi and cxii. The most perfect Psalm in this respect is the longest in the Book, Psalm cxix.

The Psalms and the New Testament Scriptures.

As already stated the Psalms are quoted by the Spirit of God more than any other Old Testament book. This is significant and a divine indication of the great importance of these inspired gems. We give now a list of quotations as found in the N. T. and also those passages where the Psalms are alluded to.

Matthew iv:6 (Psalm xci:11). This first quotation is by the Devil. By this he showed his great knowledge of the Word and its meaning. Matthew xiii:35 (Psalm lxxviii:2). Matthew xxi:42 (Psalm cxviii:22). Matthew xxvii:43 (Psalm cx). John ii:17 (Psalm lxix:9). John vi:31 (Psalm lxxviii:24, 25). John vii:42 (Psalm cxxxii:11). John x:34 (Psalm lxxxii:6). John xiii:18 (Psalm xli:9). John xv:25 (Psalm xxxv:19; lxix:4). John xix:24 (Psalm xxii:18). Verse 28 (Psalm lxix:21). Verse 36 (Psalm xxxiv:20). John xx:17 (Psalm xxii:17). Acts i:20 (Psalm lxix:25). Acts i:16 (Psalm xli:9). Acts ii:25 (Psalm xvi:8). Verse 34 (Psalm cx:1). Acts iv:25 (Psalm ii:1, 2). Acts xiii:33 (Psalm ii:7). Verse 35 (Psalm xvi:10). Romans iii:4 (Psalm li:4). Verse 12 (Psalm xiv:2). Verse 13 (Psalm cxl:3). Romans iv:6 (Psalm xxxii:1, 2). Romans xi:9, 10 (Psalm lxix:22, 23). Romans xv:10 (Psalm cxvii:1). Ephes. iv:8 (Psalm lxviii:18). 2 Cor. iv:13 (Psalm cxvi:10). Hebrews i:10–12 (Psalm cii:25–27). Verse 8–9 (Psalm xlv:6–7). Verse 13 (Psalm xc:1). Hebrews ii:6 (Psalm viii:4). Hebrews iv:3 (Psalm xcv:11). Verse 7 (Psalm xcv:7). Hebrews v:2 (Psalm ii:4). Verse 6 (Psalm cx:4). Hebrews vii:17 (Psalm cx:4). Revel. ii:27 (Psalm ii:8).

This is not by an means a complete list of quotations, for there are many more passages. We have quoted only the most prominent. See also Psalm in Hebrew i:5 and Revel. ii:27. Psalm iv: 4 in Ephesians iv:26. Psalm iv:8 in Matthew vii:23. In Psalm vi:8. Matthew xi:16 in Psalm viii:2. Psalm vii:6 in 1 Corinth. xv:25–27. Psalm ix:8 in Acts xvii:31. Psalm xix:4 in Romans x:18. Psalm xxi:1 in Matthew xxvii:46. Psalm xxii:21 in 2 Tim. iv:17. Psalm xxiv:1 in 1 Cor. x:26. Psalm xxvii:1 in Hebrew xiii:6. Psalm xxxiv:8 in 1 Peter ii:3. Psalm xl: 6–8 in Hebrews x:5–7.

Psalm xli:9 in Mark xiv:18 and John xiii:18. Psalm xlviii:2 in Matthew v:35. Psalm l:14 in Hebrews xiii:15. Psalm lv:22 in 1 Peter v:7. Psalm lvi:4 in Hebrews xiii:6. Psalm lxix:21 in Mark xv:36. Psalm lxxix:6 in 2 Thess. i:8. Psalm lxxxix:27, 37 in Revel. i:5 and iii:14. Psalm xcvii:6 in Hebrews i:6. Psalm civ in Hebrews i:7, etc.

In all about 50 Psalms are directly and indirectly quoted and alluded to in the Books of the New Testament.

The Message of the Psalms.

It would be impossible to give a complete review of the great message contained in the Psalms. A close study of each Psalm only can bring this out fully and even then we probably touch but the surface of this marvellous mine of wisdom and knowledge. That a part of the message is the experience of the Saint in the world, his trials, sorrows, the persecutions he suffers, his dependence on God, his deliverance and much else, is known to all readers of this book. Yet it must be remembered that the experiences are those of Jewish Saints; true Christian experience is higher. In the midst of persecutions from the enemies, these Jewish Saints call to God to destroy their enemies, to burn them up like stubble. The New Testament demands that Saints should love their enemies. What these imprecatory Psalms mean and how perfectly in order they are in the message of this Book we shall show in the annotations. Nor do we find in these experiences salvation made known as it is in the Gospel dispensation. While the writers of the Psalms call on the Lord and use different names by which they call Him, as Rock, fortress, shepherd, shield, etc., nowhere do we find that one ever utters the word "Father," nor is there a declaration of the Sonship of the Saint, nor do we find anything of the blessed Hope of Glory to be with Him in the Father's house. The message of Praise, giving Thanks, Adoration and Worship is another prominent feature. But true Christian Worship and praise is of a higher note and order. No such doxology like the doxology of Ephes. i:3 is found anywhere in the Psalms. Yet the Christian believer, with the light of the full Gospel revelation, indwelt by the same Spirit who gave the Psalms, can get the sweetest comfort and encouragement from the experiences recorded in these songs.

While this is part of the message of this Book, the great message is the message of Prophecy. The Book of Psalms is pre-eminently a prophetic Book. The New Testament warrants us to say this for the quotations from the Psalms are overwhelmingly on prophetic lines. It is not said too much when we say that all the great prophetic messages of the Prophets of God, and their visions concerning the future are wonderfully given by the Psalms and many of them are enlarged. The prophetic scope of the Psalms is truly marvellous.

Yet this feature of it is the most neglected in the study of the Book. It is rarely ever studied as a prophetic book; the devotional study has always been in the lead.

What then is the Prophetic Message of the Psalms? The prophecies of the Psalms comprise the following three themes:

1. The prophetic message concerning the Messiah, His humiliation and His exaltation. There are more prophetic statements on this theme of all themes in the Psalms, than in the Book of Isaiah or in any of the other prophetic books. As already stated in the paragraph of this introduction relating to the Lord Jesus and the Psalms, we have in many of them the pre-written prayers of our Lord, as well as the expressions of His sorrow and grief. The story of His life of loneliness down here, the hatred which He met, the rejection from the side of the nation; the betrayal and other features of His humiliation are found over and over again in the Psalms. While the chosen instruments passed through experiences of sorrow and trial, the Spirit of God pictures in them Him who could say "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto Me." (Lament. i:12). But the application of these Psalms to the Person of our Lord needs great caution. Some teachers have erred grievously in this matter. We heard several years ago of a Bible teacher applying Psalm xxxviii:7 to our Lord: "For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh." And this teacher declared that the Lord suffered thus because He took upon Himself our sickness and diseases. Such teaching must be severely condemned for it is positively false. Nor must other similar expressions be put into the mouth of our Lord. He had no need to complain of sins for He had no sin. He had no need to use the Fifty-first Psalm.

The sufferings of the Cross are prophetically revealed in the xxii Psalm and in others as well. Then the glory which is to follow, the Kingship of Christ, His Kingdom is wonderfully predicted in many of the Psalms. His first Coming in humiliation, to be rejected and to die; His second Coming to be accepted and to reign over the earth, these are the two great prophetic messages of the Psalms. It is of much interest to note the order of the four great Messianic Psalms which we find in the first section of the Book. The Spirit of God calls our attention to them in the N. T. The second Psalm is the first; here the Divine Sonship of our Lord is made known. The Eighth Psalm is next quoted; there He is the Son of Man. In Psalm xvi we see Him as the Obedient One and in Psalm xxii obedient unto death, the death of the Cross. Son of God — Son of Man, Obedient, obedient unto death, the death of the Cross. And with each of these Psalms His glory is connected.

2. The second Prophetic theme of the Psalms we mention are the

sorrows, trials and suffering of Israel and their coming deliverance, restoration, blessing and glory. We do not mean by this the prediction of their present wanderings and the afflictions which are upon that nation as a result of having rejected the Christ, but the experiences through which a godly Jewish remnant will have to pass when this present age closes in its predicted darkness and apostasy. Of this time Jeremiah speaks as the time of Jacob's trouble. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." That remnant will appear when the purpose of this present dispensation, the out calling of the people for His Name (the Church) is accomplished. A remnant of His earthly people, energized by the Spirit of God, will turn to the Lord and pass through that time of trouble, of which our Lord speaks as the great tribulation. It will be the travail time for them. They suffer from the side of ungodly nations and pray for deliverance. (See Isaiah lxiii–15–lxiv.) The Psalms give us the completest picture of their harrowing experiences. Here we read their sorrows, their afflictions. We hear their prayers, their cry "How long, O Lord, how long!" We hear them plead that the Lord might intervene and come down to save them. The nations about them persecute them. The land, which is partially restored, is invaded again. Then we read in the Psalms of a Wicked Man who domineers over them; one who breaks the covenant. This is the Man of Sin, the final Anti-Christ. And as they pray for deliverance, they cry to God for vengeance, to deal with their enemies and with His enemies according to His righteousness. This will explain perfectly the imprecatory prayers we find here and there in this book.

Suddenly the scene changeth. Their prayers are answered. Heaven opens and the long expected King returns. Their tears are wiped away; their moans are changed to songs, their agonizing cries are turned to laughter. They are delivered and receive the blessing as His people, their land is blest and they become the channel of blessing and mercy to the nations of the earth. It is all intensely interesting and fascinating.

3. The third prophetic theme shows the future glories in store for His redeemed people, for the nations of the earth and for creation itself. In other words we have prophecies relating to the Coming Kingdom. The prophetic teaching of the Psalms annihilates Post-millennialism. These prophecies show conclusively that there can be no blessing for Israel, for the nations, for the earth, no peace and prosperity, no world conversion, till the King comes back. The Book ends with the mighty Hallelujahs, the glorious consummation when heaven and earth will sing His praises. How well Handel caught this message when in his Oratorio, "The Messiah," he con-

cludes all with a mighty Hallelujah chorus. Our annotations will adhere to this threefold prophetic message. The task is difficult to condense these great truths. Far easier it would be to write a book of a thousand pages than one of a hundred. It is all so rich and glorious.

The Division of the Psalms.

The unknown collector of these Psalms has divided the Book into five sections, which we must maintain and follow. These five sections correspond in a remarkable manner with the five books with which the Bible opens, the Pentateuch. This was known to the ancient Jews, for they call the Psalter "the Pentateuch of David." The Aramaic comment (Midrash) on Psalm i: 1 declares that "Moses gave to the Israelites the five books of the Law and corresponding with these David gave them the five books of the Psalms."

I. THE GENESIS SECTION, Psalms I–XLI. This section has the same character as the Book of Genesis in that it has much to say about man. We have first a contrast between the righteous and the ungodly. After that a contrast between the first man, Adam, and the second Man who was made a little lower than the angels. (Psalm VIII.) Here also is a description of the Wicked One, in whom in some future day the defiance of the ungodly will culminate. This man of sin, the Anti-Christ, is revealed in Psalms IX and X; the tribulation which is yet to come for man is revealed in the Psalms which follow. The Christ, the last Adam, in His obedience, even the obedience unto the death of the cross, His salvation and His Glory are unfolded. (Psalms XVI–XLI.) The first Book ends with a Blessing and a double Amen.

II. THE EXODUS SECTION. Psalms XLII–LXXII. Like in the Book of Exodus, where the story is written how God redeems by blood and by power, we see a people groaning and moaning. The opening Psalms show a people oppressed and longing for God. This is the godly Jewish remnant. Then we find their prayers answered by the coming of the King (Psalm xlv). Redemption by

power then takes place and the blessings of the Kingdom, when Christ has returned, are revealed in a number of Psalms. The lxxii Psalm, the conclusion of this second Book gives the Reign and the Kingly Glory of Christ. This book also ends with a double Amen and the statement, so very appropriate to this Book, "And let the whole earth be filled with His glory." The book of Exodus ends with the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle, the Exodus portion of the Psalms ends with His glory filling the whole earth.

III. THE LEVITICUS SECTION. Psalm LXXIII–Psalm LXXXIX. This is the briefest section. The theme of Leviticus is "Holiness unto the Lord." In this section we are brought into the sanctuary and we behold the holiness of the Lord in dealing with His people. The Asaph Psalms are put into this section and nearly every Psalm has something about the sanctuary, the congregation, Zion and approaching the Lord. It also closeth with a benediction and a double Amen.

IV. THE NUMBERS SECTION. Psalms XC–CVI. The first Psalm of this section is the Psalm Moses wrote, in all probability when he saw the people dying in the wilderness. The second Man is seen in Psalm xci. Here we have the prophetic Psalms which show that the times of unrest and wanderings will cease, when the Lord reigneth and when the nations will worship Him. No rest and no peace till then. This section ends with an Amen and a Hallelujah.

V. THE DEUTERONOMY SECTION. Psalms CVII–CL. In this section, as it is in Deuteronomy, the Word is magnified. The Lord Jesus Christ quoted this book of Deuteronomy exclusively in His conflict with the devil. Christ is seen as the Living Word in the beginning of this section. His rejection, His exaltation, His Return and the Hallelujah times which follow are once more revealed in a cluster of Psalms (cix–cxiii). Then follows the con-

summation, deliverances, the end-ways of God, His Praise and His Glory. This section ends with five Hallelujah Psalms. It is the Hallelujah chorus of completed redemption.

Analysis and Annotations.

I. THE GENESIS SECTION. Psalms I–XLI.

1. Subdivision. Psalms I–VIII.

PSALM I.

The Godly and the Ungodly.

1. The Godly, His Character and His Fruit (verses 1–3).
2. The Ungodly in Comparison with the Godly (verses 4–6).

The first eight Psalms are the Psalms in embryo, just as the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis are the Bible in a nutshell. Throughout the Psalms we can trace the subjects of these eight Psalms, the godly and the ungodly; but especially the great theme of the Psalms, Christ, the Perfect Man, the King rejected, the suffering of the righteous during the time of His rejection, the King enthroned and all things put under His feet. These are the leading themes of Psalms i–viii.

Psalms i and ii are introductory to the entire collection, put there by the Holy Spirit. In some ancient manuscripts the first Psalm is not numbered, in others the i and ii Psalms are put into one. The first Psalm begins with a beatitude and the second ends with a beatitude. The righteous man, negative and positive, nothing evil in him, no fellowship with sinners, and positive, obedience and entire devotedness to God, does not mean the natural man. The godly One is the perfect One who walked down here separated from sinners, and devoted to God. He walked in obedience, in dependence on God and in communion with Him, and therefore the blessing, honor and glory are His. But the godly man is also the believer, born of God, separated, a Saint, who delights in the things of God, meditates in His Word day and night. It is still more, a description of what the true believing remnant of Israel

will be some day, "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." Such is converted, redeemed Israel's future as revealed here and also by Isaiah: "Thy people shall all be righteous, they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (Isaiah lx:21). We behold then in these opening verses of the Psalms the Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect Man, the individual believer in his separation and devotion, and what Israel, saved and converted, will be in the future.*

Then the ungodly: "Like the chaff which the wind driveth away" is a prophecy of the time when the ungodly are dealt with in judgment, when "He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. iii:12). Then the ungodly will forever disappear and cease troubling the righteous. They will have no place in the assembly of the righteous in millennial times.

PSALM II.

The Rejected King.

1. The Rejection and the Coming Confederacy (verses 1–3).
2. Jehovah's attitude and interference (verses 4–6).
3. The Coming of the King and His Inheritance (verses 7–9).
4. Warning and Exhortation (verses 10–12).

Verses 1–3. The rejection of the perfect Man, the Son of God, by man, is here revealed. It is the first psalm quoted in the New Testament. See Acts iv:25–28. In this quotation it is applied to the Jews and Gentiles gathered together against the Lord, and against His

* The Romish church has a volume called "The Psalter of the Virgin Mary compiled by Doctor St. Bonaventura." It is in Latin and contains the 150 Psalms, greatly abridged, and each addressed to Mary. Psalm i begins as follows: "Happy is the man that loves thy Name, O Virgin Mary, thy grace will comfort his soul. Ave Maria." Psalm xix: "The Heavens declare thy glory, O Virgin Mary." Horrible blasphemy!

Christ. This rejection continues throughout this present age; it becomes more marked as the age draws to its close. Finally the nations with their kings and also apostate Israel will form a great confederacy, they will form a tumultuous throng, taking counsel together for one great purpose, Satanically conceived and executed, to defy God and His Christ. The Generallisimo will be Satan through the Beast. It is the gathered confederacy as seen in Revelation. "And he gathered them together in a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. xvi: 16). "And I saw the Beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse (Christ) and His army" (Rev. xix: 19).

Verses 4–6. Heaven is silent till the appointed time comes. Here we have, as in Psalm cx, the exalted position of the rejected Christ: He sitteth in the heavens; His place is at the right hand of God. He shares the Father's throne. In infinite patience He is waiting, silent to all what wicked men do in dishonouring His Name. But when on earth the final rebellion takes place, then He will laugh at them and hold them in derision.* Then He who has so long spoken in love, will speak in wrath and begin the execution of God's judgments which are committed into His hand. Then will He be established as God's King upon the holy hill of Zion.

Verses 7–9. And now we hear Him speak; He proclaims God's counsel concerning Himself. He declares who He is, "the Son of God"—"Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee." (See the N. T. comment, Acts xiii: 33, 34.) It is not a declaration of His eternal Sonship (though that is implied), but speaks of Him as the incarnate One and the Risen One. And His Second

* The Jewish comment contained in the ancient "Yalkut Shimoni" is interesting. "Like a robber who was standing and expressing his contempt behind the palace of the King, and saying, If I find the Son of the King, I will seize him, kill him, and crucify him, and put him to a terrible death, but the Lord mocks at it."

Coming will be the completest vindication of His Sonship. It will demonstrate that He whom the nations rejected is the Son of God, who walked on the earth, who died, rose from the dead, ascended upon high and is manifested in power and glory. Then every mouth will be stopped and every knee must bow. He asks the Father and He gives Him the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. In His prayer in John xvii (the model of His priestly intercession throughout this age of grace), He said, "I pray not for the world." When His present priestly ministrations cease, that is, when His own have been received by Him in glory, then will He ask for the world and receive the kingdoms of this world, to shepherd the nations with a rod of iron and execute judgment among them.

Verses 10–12. The exhortation and warning closes this perfect and beautiful Psalm. It is meant especially for that time when the final revolt takes place. The appeal goes forth then to turn to the Lord, to kiss the Son —"for in a little will His anger kindle." So even at that time mercy still is waiting. Critics object to the use of the Aramaic word "Bar"— Son — and give as the correct translation "receive instruction" or "do homage." The word "Bar" is used in place of the Hebrew "Ben" for the sake of euphony. "Blessed are they that put their trust in Him." That is true of all at all times. It is our blessedness.

PSALMS III–VII.

Sorrows and Trials of the Godly Remnant.

PSALM III.

1. Persecution and Comfort (verses 1–4).
2. Arise Jehovah! Save me, O my God (verses 5–8).

The five Psalms which follow bring before us the godly remnant of Israel, their sorrows and trials during the end of the age, while the expected Redeemer and King has not

yet come. While this is the dispensational aspect, the application is wider. The trials and sorrows are common to all Saints, who live in accordance with their calling apart from the world which rejects Christ; and the comfort belongs to them likewise.

Verses 1–4. The Psalm was written by David when he fled from the face of Absalom. Persecution is mentioned first. The remnant is suffering persecution and that from their own unbelieving brethren, who sneer at them and mock. "There is no salvation (deliverance) for him from God." But the godly trust in Jehovah as a shield about them, giving protection; He is my glory and the lifter up of mine head. Thus David encouraged himself in the Lord and so do all Saints in persecution and the remnant when they are persecuted in the time of Jacob's trouble.

Verses 5–8. The simple faith produces peace and quietness. He has slept in peace even if myriads of people should set themselves around him. He cries to Jehovah to arise and to save. Then faith looks back and remembers that God hath smitten the enemies in the past, and broken the teeth of the ungodly. He acknowledgeth that Salvation belongeth to the Lord, it is of Him and that His blessing rests upon His people who trust in Him. Viewed in connection with the remnant of Israel in the coming tribulation all this takes on an interesting meaning. It is called a morning hymn.

PSALM IV.

1. The Cry to Jehovah (verses 1–3).
2. The Warning to the Enemies (verses 4–5).
3. The Assurance of Faith.

Verses 1–3. The fourth Psalm is closely connected with the third; the third is "a Morning Psalm" and the fourth "an Evening Hymn." He calls God "God of my righteousness" and He knows that He will act in righteousness toward him, be gracious and hear prayer. Then

the appeal to the sons of men, who love emptiness and seek after a lie. They should know that the Lord hath set apart the godly for Himself and therefore He will hear.

Verses 4–5. This expresseth the concern of the godly for those who reject the Lord, it is a warning appeal to turn from their evil ways, to offer the sacrifices of righteousness and to trust Jehovah.

Verses 6–8. The mocking words "who will show us any good?" the challenge of unbelief, is met by prayer and the assurance of faith. "Lift upon us the light of Thy countenance, Jehovah." This we shall find later is a choice prayer of the Jewish Saints in the tribulation. (See Psalm lxxx.) His heart is filled with joy; he knows he is safe. "For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Such is the experience of the godly, who trust the Lord. Their hearts are filled with gladness; their safety is the Lord.

PSALM V.

1. The Cry to God the King (verses 1–3).
2. Hating Iniquity and Trusting in Mercy (verses 4–7).
3. Prayer for Guidance and Judgment (verses 8–12).

Verses 1–3. In the Third Psalm trust is expressed in God as shield; in the fourth the prayer is to the God of righteousness. "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God." It is a fresh and more intense prayer, because evil increaseth and abounds. The cry is to God as King. David calls Him King, as the Jewish remnant will pray to the King and look for the coming of the King. The church looks for the Lord, for the Bridegroom. Nowhere is the Lord Jesus Christ spoken of as the King of the church.

Verses 4–7. The Holiness of God is recognized and shared by the godly in hating iniquity. His confidence is in a sin and iniquity hating God, a holy God. He has no pleasure in wickedness or in folly. Falsehood He hates

and liars He will destroy. Such are the enemies of God and his enemies also. The bloody and deceitful man mentioned in verse 6 is the first mention of the Man of sin, the false Christ, who will persecute Jewish Saints in the future. And how beautiful it is to see faith breaking through the gathering storm clouds again—"But as for me I will come into thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy, in Thy fear I will worship toward Thy holy Temple." The final victory is seen by faith.

Verses 8–12. Prayer for guidance stands first. "Lead me, Jehovah, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies." What these enemies, especially the future enemies of Israel will be, their character, is described and this is followed by prayer for judgment. Here is the first imprecatory prayer. (Verse 10.) This and the other imprecatory prayers will be prayed during the final days of this age, when the wicked are ripe for judgment. It will be answered and then the righteous will be delivered and have joy. (Verses 11, 12.) All this we shall find very much more prominent in the Exodus section of the Psalms.

PSALM VI.

1. The Cry of Repentance (verses 1–3).
2. In Deep Distress (verses 4–7).
3. Jehovah has Heard (verses 8–10).

Verses 1–3. Here we have the deep soul exercise of the godly expressed. In the midst of the trials and sorrows they search their hearts. The persecution of the enemies is used under God to bring His people in the dust. And so they feel the trial and sorrow which passeth over them as Divine displeasure against sin. They feel it is the chastening hand of God which rests heavily upon them. Perhaps bodily sickness is also indicated. They cry, Jehovah how long? It is a night experience, of deepest woe and agony. We know that all things must work together for good to them that love God and that our Loving Father does not chasten in the heat of wrath.

Verses 4–7. But there is deeper distress. There is groaning, the couch is covered with tears, the eyes are sunken in because of grief. The remnant is put into the place of dust, and that is the place of blessing and deliverance.

Verses 8–10. Faith again is victorious. The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping; heard the voice of my supplication; He will receive my prayer. The last verse is prophetic. All the enemies will be ashamed, they shall be suddenly ashamed. That will be when the Lord returns to save His people.

PSALM VII.

1. Confidence and Prayer (verses 1–2).
2. Unjust Persecution (verses 3–5).
3. Arise Jehovah! (verses 6–10).
4. God's Dealings in Government (verses 11–16).
5. Thanksgiving (verse 17).

Verses 1–2. It has been suggested that over this Psalm should be written the sentence, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" David appeared to God to judge His cause, that a righteous God cannot but save the righteous and judge the wicked. David sang this unto the Lord concerning the words of Cush, the Benjamite. Who Cush was we do not know. He must be a type of the Man of Sin. David appeals to God who is his refuge, to save and rescue him. The lion stands ready to tear him to pieces.

Verses 3–5. He knows it is unjust persecution he is suffering. If he had done evil to others he might well be treated in this way.

Verses 6–10. Then follows the appeal to Jehovah to arise in His anger, and to awake for him the judgment He has commanded, when the peoples are assembled for judgment. This appeal from the lips of the remnant will be answered by the manifestation of the Lord.

Verses 11–16. God's judgments in righteousness will

overtake the wicked. It is a prophetic description of that day when the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end and the righteous are established. Verses 14–16 are another description of the Man of Sin, the Wicked One.

Verse 17. A Word of Praise closes this series of Psalms in which the Millennial Name of Jehovah is given "The Most High." We see that the overthrow of the wicked brings the Praise of Jehovah, as it will be heard on earth when He has come back. In reviewing these Psalms, beginning with the third, we have a morning hymn (iii), followed by an evening hymn (iv); then a night experience (v), followed by the deepest night (vi) and the breaking of the morning, when the Judge ariseth and the wickedness of the Wicked come to an end (vii).

The Son of Man; All Things put under His feet.

PSALM VIII.

1. A little lower than the Angels; Crowned with Glory (verses 1–5).
2. All Things put under Him (verses 6–8).
3. How excellent is Thy Name over all the Earth (verse 9).

Verses 1–5. In this Psalm we behold Christ again, and here as Son of Man. Three times this Psalm is quoted in the New Testament; in Matthew xxi: 16, 1 Corinth. xv: 27 and Hebrews ii: 6–9. The latter passage shows clearly who the Son of Man is who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, to taste death for everything and who is now crowned with glory and honor.*

The Psalm begins with praise; it will be His praise in that coming day when all things are put under His feet

* The inscription of this Psalm is "upon Gittith"—the winepress. If the theory is correct that the titles of the Psalms were misplaced, then "Gittith" should belong to the preceding Psalm, where it would find a good application. But it is equally in place in the beginning of this Psalm, for the Son of Man went into the winepress, the suffering of death when He shed His precious blood.

as the second Man, the last Adam, then His Name will be excellent in all the earth and His Glory will be set in the Heavens (the New Jerusalem). The little children in the Temple who sang their Hosannahs when the Lord Jesus was there foreshadow this coming praise. Many expositors have made of "the son of Man" Adam, the first man; but he is the type of the last Adam; the Lord Jesus is meant as Hebrew ii: 6–9 tells us so clearly.

Verses 6–8. The first man lost his dominion through sin, the second Man has bought it back by His death. When He comes again then all things will be put under His feet. During His absence "we see not yet all things put under Him." He must reign till all enemies are put under His feet.

Verse 9. The Psalm closes with the same praise with which it begins. It is the future praise of Him, who was made a little lower than the angels and whose Name in that day will be excellent in all the earth. We beheld Him as the perfect Man, as the King, rejected by men, enthroned by God, with the nations for His inheritance, in the opening Psalms. Then followed (Psalms iii–vii) the experiences of the godly during His absence, especially the Jewish remnant and the Eighth Psalm shows Him as Son of Man, who comes for the deliverance of His people and receives the dominion over all the earth.

The Godly Remnant, The Wicked One and His Followers.

PSALMS IX–XV.

PSALM IX.

1. The Praise of the Most High (verses 1–2).
2. Millennial Deliverances and Glories (verses 3–12).
3. Prayer for Divine Intervention; Faith's Vision (verses 12–18).

Verses 1–2. Psalms ix–xv continue the great prophetic story. Once more the godly remnant is before us and in this section the Wicked One, the man of sin, is also re-

vealed. The first part of this Psalm is a prophetic vision of what will be on earth, when the Son of Man has come and when all things are put under Him. His triumph is celebrated. We doubt not what is written here will be the comfort of that company of believing Jews at the end of the age as they anticipate in faith what will be when the King comes. But how much more we His heavenly people should praise Him, and declare His wondrous works in grace.

Verses 3–12. What it will mean when the Lord reigns is told out in these verses. His enemies will be defeated; He rebukes the nations and destroys the wicked; He judgeth the world in righteousness, and He is a refuge for His people. The Lord will dwell in Zion, Israel will sing praises and become the witness amongst the nations.

Verses 13–20. Up to the previous verse we saw the glorious results for Israel when the Son of Man comes. But that has not yet come. Faith realizeth it. In verse 13 we hear the voice of supplication of those who in faith look forward to the promises, but who suffer in the midst of the trials of the ending days of the age. They are hated and suffer and long to shew forth praises in Zion. Then once more the vision of faith what must happen ere long to the nations and to the wicked (15–18). The plea "Arise, O Lord," is the prayer for His glorious manifestation.

This Psalm and the next are linked together by the letters of the Alphabet (in Hebrew). Ten letters are used in this Psalm and five in the next. Six letters are dropped out in this alphabetical composition. The irregularity may be explained as in harmony with the time of tribulation, when everything on earth is broken and out of joint.

PSALM X.

1. The Cry of Jehovah and what Causeth It (verses 1–2).
2. That Wicked One (verses 3–11).
3. Prayer for Divine Intervention; Faith's Vision (verses 12–18).

Verses 1–2. Here is a renewed cry to Jehovah and why? Because the Wicked in his pride persecutes the poor. The Wicked is that coming man of Sin.

Verses 3–11. That persecutor of the Saints of God is now prophetically revealed in his arrogant pride, defiance of God and oppression of the poor and needy. Such will be the character of the Beast out of the earth, the man of sin and son of perdition (2 Thessal. ii). We shall get other photographs of the same person in other Psalms.

Verses 12–18. Significant prayers these. And they will be prayed by that future remnant. Arise — Lift up Thy hand — forget not; — Thou hast seen it — Break thou the arm of the wicked! And then faith seeth the answer. "The Lord is King forever and ever." The prayer of the humble has been heard. The man of the earth no more oppresseth.

PSALM XI.

1. Faith's Resources in the Day of Trouble (verses 1–4).
2. The Recompense for the Righteous and the Wicked.

Verses 1–4. Their refuge is the Lord, in Him they trust as we, His heavenly people, know Him as our hiding place in the time of trouble. That coming day of trouble is the time "when the foundations are destroyed." It is the time of apostasy and confusion. But their comfort is "Jehovah is in His holy temple, the Throne of Jehovah is in heaven."

Verses 5–7. But faith also reckons with the day of retribution and judgment, when the days of tribulation are ended. Then the wicked receive their punishment. But the righteous shall behold His face.

PSALM XII.

1. The Arrogancy of the Wicked in the last Days (verses 1–4).
2. Then Jehovah will act and deliver His people (verses 5–8).

Verses 1–4. It is the time of departure from the Lord;

the godly and faithful have ceased. It is a mass of corruption, lying lips, flattering lips, proud lips. They reject the Lord. "Who is lord over us?"

Verses 5–8. Then faith sees the coming intervention. The Lord will speak. "Now will I arise, saith Jehovah, I will set him in safety whom they would puff." Jehovah will keep His people in these coming dark days.—"when the wicked walk on all sides and the vilest men are exalted."

PSALM XIII.

1. How long? Answer me, Jehovah (verses 1–4).
2. The Victory of Faith (verses 5–6).

Verses 1–4. Four times "How long?" The trial of faith becomes more severe. Sorrow is in the heart and an enemy is outside. Has then Jehovah forgotten? The hearts begin to despair; an answer is demanded, it must come "lest I sleep the sleep of death."

Verses 5–6. But here comes the change. Faith triumphs and is victorious. "I have trusted in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation. I will sing unto Jehovah, for He hath dealt bountifully with me."

PSALM XIV.

1. The Days of Noah Repeated (verses 1–6).
2. Salvation and Glory (verse 7).

Verses 1–6. As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh. Here we have a prophetic forecast of these coming days of corruption and violence. Iniquity abounds, wickedness is on all sides. None doeth good, none seeketh after God. While all this is used by the Spirit of God in the Epistle to the Romans to describe the condition of the race at large, here dispensationally it describes the moral conditions in the end of the age.

Verse 7. Will this end? Is there to be a better day

than violence and wickedness? When will that day come? It comes when the salvation comes out of Zion (Romans xi: 26), when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people, when Israel is restored. That will be when the Lord returns.

PSALM XV.

1. The Question (verse 1).
2. The Answer (verses 2–5).

Verse 1. The connection with the previous Psalm is obvious. When He comes and that promised salvation becomes reality, who then shall sojourn in His tabernacle? Who shall dwell in His holy Hill? Who will become a partaker of that kingdom, when the King is set upon the holy hill of Zion?

Verses 2–5. The answer is given. The character here described is impossible for the natural man. To walk uprightly, to work righteousness, to speak the truth in the heart and practise righteousness in life is only possible if man is born again. So Israel will be born again, receive the new heart and the Spirit and thus enter the Kingdom.

A Revelation of the Christ of God.

PSALMS XVI–XXIV.

PSALM XVI.

1. The Obedient One (verses 1–3).
2. The Path He Went (verses 4–8).
3. Death and Resurrection (verses 9–11).

In the nine Psalms which compose this section Christ is marvellously revealed. We notice an interesting progress in the messianic message of this section, culminating in the manifestation of the King, the Lord of Glory in Psalm xxiv. In the xvi Psalm we behold Christ in His obedience on earth. See also Paul's testimony in Acts xiii: 35.

Verses 1–3. Here we hear Him speak; it is not David

who speaks of himself. This we learn from Acts ii:25, when Peter quoted this Psalm and states that David spoke concerning Him (Christ). As the all obedient One, in humiliation He lived the life of faith and dependence on God. He took the place of lowliness in which He said to Jehovah, "Thou art my Lord." And this humiliation was for the Saints and the excellent, His own people in whom is all His delight.

Verses 4–8. In that path the Lord was His portion and His cup, He was His All, nor did He want anything beside Him. "Thou maintainest my lot." Thus He could say "the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly inheritance." And so He walked in obedience, learning obedience though He was the Son, with the Lord always set before Him.

Verses 9–11. These last three verses show that He went into death, the death of the cross as seen in Psalm xxii, with the assurance that His soul should not be left in sheol and that His body should not see corruption. It is the promise of resurrection and after that glory, the way of life through death into the presence of God, to the right hand of God, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. It is a beautiful prophecy of Him who walked on earth in obedience, devoted to God, dying the sinner's death, His resurrection and His presence in glory. We shall find these precious prophecies concerning Himself more fully revealed in this section.

PSALM XVII.

The Prayer of Christ against the Enemy.

1. The Righteous Intercessor (verses 1–5).
2. Prayer for Deliverance (verses 6–12).
3. The Deliverance (verses 13–15).

Verses 1–5. This Psalm is blessedly linked with the foregoing one. We hear Christ interceding for the Saints in whom is His delight (xvi:3). He pleads His own per-

fection. He is righteous; His prayer does not come from feigned lips. Not David, but Christ alone could truly say, "Thou hast proved my heart; thou hast visited me in the night; Thou hast tried me. Thou findest nothing." By the Word of God He had walked and was kept from the paths of the destroyer. What a grand testimony to inspiration we have in verse 4 when the Spirit of Christ declares beforehand that Christ would walk in obedience to the Word and that Word is called here "the Word of Thy lips," which came from the mouth and heart of God.

Verses 6–12. It is a marvellous prayer for His own with whom He so perfectly identifies Himself. The Seventh verse is the key, for He prays, "Show Thy marvellous Loving-kindness, delivering those who put their trust in Thee by Thy right hand from those rising up against them." He pleads for His beloved Saints that they may be kept as the apple of the eye, and hidden under the shadow of His wings. He speaks as for Himself, but it is for the Saints, those that trust God, and God hears Him and answers. The enemy threatens His people on earth and therefore we find the plural in verse 11, "they have now compassed us in our steps."

Verses 13–15. The final prayer is to the Lord to arise and to rescue His suffering people from the wicked one, who is the sword in the hand of the Lord. Then when the Lord ariseth His people will behold His face in righteousness and in awakening shall be satisfied with His likeness. Oh, blessed Hope! which is ours too, when shall it be!

PSALM XVIII.

The Story of God's Power in Behalf of Christ.

1. In the Jaws of Death (verses 1–6).
2. God Appearing and Delivering (verses 7–18).
3. God gave Him Glory (verses 19–27).
4. His Enemies Subdued (verses 28–42).
5. The Head of the Nations (verses 43–45).

Verses 1–6. This is another remarkable Psalm,

Though David wrote it not everything could be his experience. He was a prophet (Acts ii: 30) and prophesied; much in this Psalm is prophecy describing the Deliverance of Christ from the Jaws of Death and the Glory God has given Him, and this deliverance and glory also concerns the remnant of His earthly people in "that day." The Psalm begins with an outburst of Praise and it ends with His Praise among the nations. Hebrew authorities tell us that the proper translation of "The Lord is my Rock" is "Jehovah, my cleft of the rock." It is Christ the rock, cleft for us, in whom the believer has found His refuge. And He Himself was saved from His enemies and in Him His people are saved and will be saved from their enemies (verse 3). It is His own death experience which is described in verses 4–6. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of Belial (marginal reading) made me afraid." Then in His distress He called and cried unto God and was heard.

Verses 7–18. In these verses we have the answer in behalf of Christ. It is a wonderful description of God's power and His appearing. It is the manifestation and glory of Jehovah in deliverance. "He sent from above, He took Me, He drew me from great waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hate me, for they were too strong for me." This describes His resurrection.

At the same time while all this shows His experience as the author and finisher of the Faith, it is also the experience of His trusting people, and the deliverance of that remnant living during the tribulation period.

Verses 19–27. The Lord has recompensed Him for His righteousness. He not only raised Him from the dead "but gave Him glory." He was brought forth into a large place. He was delivered because God delighted in Him and He has rewarded Him. Verse 23 as it stands in the authorized version can not apply to Christ. It is in fact a poor translation. The translation in the Numerical Bible is very satisfactory. "I was also perfect with

Him and kept myself from perverseness being mine."

Verses 28–42. He will save an humble people and all His enemies will be conquered by Him. While much in this section was David's experience, who overcame all his enemies, in its prophetic meaning it must apply to the Lord Jesus. Verses 37–42 speak prophetically of this coming great victory when all His enemies will be made the footstool of His feet.

Verses 43–45. He becomes the head of the nations. "Thou hast made me the head of the nations" cannot apply to David and his experience, but it is David's son and David's Lord who will head the nations of the earth. It is the coming Kingdom which is described in verse 44. "As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me, the strangers (Gentiles) shall submit themselves unto me." The marginal reading is suggestive, "they shall yield feigned obedience unto Me," which tells us that the obedience of many during the Kingdom reign of our Lord will not be whole-hearted and therefore the revolt at the end of the thousand years. (Revel. xx.) His Praise will then be heard among the nations. (Verses 49–50.)

PSALM XIX.

Christ in Creation and in Revelation.

1. In Creation (verses 1–6).
2. In Revelation (verses 7–11).

Verses 1–6. This Psalm also bears witness to Christ as Creator and as revealing Himself through the Word. The two great books, Creation and Revelation, bear witness to Him. The Heavens which declare the Glory of God were created by Him. (Col. viii: 16; John i: 3.) And there is a testimony to Him in Creation which is continuous. "Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge." (See Romans i: 20.) The Sun especially mentioned, for the Sun is the type of Christ. "As a bridegroom coming out of His chamber

he rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course. His going forth is from the end of the heavens, and his circuits unto the end of it and nothing is hid from the heat thereof." He is the Sun of Righteousness, who will arise some day with healing beneath his wings.

Verses 7–11. The second witness to Him is the Law of Jehovah, the testimony and the precepts of the Lord. It is His written Word. This Word comes from Himself and speaks of Himself. What this Word is and what it produces and the practical use of the testimony of the Lord as well as prayer are mentioned in these verses.

The nineteenth Psalm is an introduction to the next five Psalms, which tells us more fully of the person of Christ, the Creator and Revealer, in His great work as Redeemer.

PSALM XX.

Christ and His Salvation as Contemplated by His People.

1. What God has done for Christ (verses 1–4).
2. His Salvation His people enjoy (verses 5–9).

Verses 1–4. "My Redeemer" was the last word of the previous Psalm. Christ the Redeemer of His people is revealed in this Psalm. His death and sacrificial work, revealed in Psalm xxvii, are here anticipated. He who humbled Himself has been heard by Jehovah, He has set Him upon high (marginal reading), He has sent Him help, He has accepted His great offering, the whole burnt offering which typifies the death of the Cross. All the desires of His heart are given to Him and all His counsels will be fulfilled. The believing remnant is contemplating the Redeemer and His Salvation. Because He has been heard, because His offering is accepted, because He is set on high, they possess salvation.

Verses 5–9. This salvation is now celebrated in inspired song. It is anticipatory of that coming salvation. They will rejoice in His salvation, as we, His heavenly

people, now rejoice in it. Banners, the symbol of victory won, will be set up. The intercessions of His Anointed (Christ) will be answered, all enemies are bowed down and fallen. "But we are risen and stand upright" refers to the day of Israel's national and spiritual resurrection. In anticipation of the trouble of the last days we read the prayer of this godly remnant. "Save Lord! Let the King hear us when we call."

PSALM XXI.

The King's Glory anticipated and contemplated.

1. The King's Power, Glory and Salvation (verses 1–6).
2. His Victory over the enemies (verses 7–13).

Verses 1–6. This is another Messianic Psalm in anticipation of the glory of the King. The prayers He offered up are all answered. (See Ps. xx: 4.) He shares the strength of Jehovah as the risen and exalted One. The desire of His heart is fulfilled, as it will be when the kingly crown of pure gold is set upon His head, the head which was once crowned with thorns. He had gone down into the jaws of death and then received life, yea, eternal life, as the head of the new creation, which shares this life He has received. And His glory is great in Jehovah's salvation, the salvation which the Lord has planned and which He has accomplished, which is His glory.

Verses 7–13. Here once more the downfall and complete overthrow of the enemies, when the King reigns, is prophetically anticipated. Then we hear in the last verse a prophetic prayer, that all this might be accomplished. "Be Thou exalted, Lord, in Thine own strength." And when He is exalted, then Israel redeemed will sing—"So will we sing and praise Thy power." *

* And how the Critics have made havoc with all these Psalms, trying to find a solution, when the Lord Jesus is the only solution as He is the key to all the Scriptures! The Targum reads in verses 1 and 7 "King Messiah" and Jewish interpretation has mostly been

PSALM XXII.

The Sufferings of Christ and the Glory that follows.

1. The Suffering (verses 1–21).
2. The Glory (verses 22–31).

Verses 1–21. In many respects this Psalm is the most remarkable in the entire book and one of the sublimest prophecies in the whole Bible. The sufferings of Christ and the Glory that should follow are here wonderfully foretold. The inscription mentions *Aijeleth Shahar*, which means "the hind of the morning." Jewish tradition identifies this hind with the early morning light, when the day dawns and the rays of the rising Sun appear like the horns of the hind. The eminent Hebraist, Professor Delitzsch, makes the following remark: "Even the Jewish synagogue, so far as it recognizes a suffering Messiah, hears His voice here, and takes the hind of the morning as a name of the Shechinah, and makes it a symbol of coming redemption. And the Targum recalls the Lamb of the morning sacrifice, which was offered as soon as the watchman on the pinnacle of the temple cried out, "The first rays of the Morning burst forth." All this is very suggestive. The inscription also tells us that the Psalm was written by David. "We know, however, of no circumstances in his life to which it can possibly be referred. In none of the persecutions by Saul was he ever reduced to such straits as those here described." (Perowne.) David's personal experience is all out of question. He speaks as a Prophet, such as he was (Acts ii: 30) and the Spirit of God useth him to give one of the completest pictures of Christ, His suffering and glory, which to David must have been a mystery, so that with other prophets, he

on Messianic lines. Perowne writes on this kingly Psalm "Each Jewish Monarch was but a feeble type of Israel's true King; and all the hopes of pious hearts still looked beyond David or David's children to Him who should be David's Lord as well as David's Son."

searched and enquired as to its meaning. (See 1 Peter i: 10–12.) Our Lord in uttering the solemn word with which this Psalm begins in the darkness which enshrouded the Cross gives us the conclusive evidence that it is He of whom the Psalm speaks. The Spirit of God equally so in Hebrews ii: 11–12 shows that it is Christ. And the glory-side of this gem of prophecy proves fully that none other than the Christ of God is meant.

The precious, blessed, unfathomable work of the sin-bearer on the Cross and its far reaching results in blessing and glory is here unfolded to our faith, as well as for our joy and comfort. The heart of the atonement occupies the foreground, not the physical sufferings, but the suffering He endured from the side of God, when He made Him who knew no sin, sin for us. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"— But Thou art holy! That is the answer to the "Why?" And when the blessed One was thus forsaken, and faced as the substitute of sinners the holy, sin-hating God, He finished the work, the work which enables God to be just and the justifier of all who believe in Jesus. "It is finished!" was His triumphant shout, expressed in the Greek by one word —"*Tetelestai.*" And our Psalm ends with a similar word —"He hath done"— the Hebrew word "*Ohsa*" expresseth the same thought — it is finished.

Still more astonishing are the details of His physical sufferings, which were all so minutely fulfilled on Calvary. Here we find foretold the piercing of hands and feet, the excessive thirst He suffered, the terrible agony by hanging suspended, every bone out of joint; the laughter and hooting of his enemies, the very expressions they used surrounding the cross are given here, and the dividing of the garments and casting lots over them and other details are prophetically revealed. And to this must be added another fact. Crucifixion was an unknown method of death in Jewish Law. Among ancient nations the Roman penal code alone seems to contain exclusively this cruel penalty; Rome evidently invented it. Yet here this un-

known death penalty is described in a perfect manner. What an evidence of Divine inspiration!

And the Critics, how they have tried to explain away this great prophecy! And they are still trying to explain it away. Some apply it to Hezekiah; others say it may describe the sufferings of Jeremiah; still others say it is the Jewish nation. And some try to make it out as being only coincident that the Hebrews had such a piece of literature and that one of their own, Jesus of Nazareth, made such an experience. Surely these infidels are fools, for only a fool can adopt and believe such a method of reasoning against these conclusive evidences of revelation.

Verses 22–31. The deliverance of the sufferer comes in with the twenty-first verse. Thrice He calls for help. "Haste Thee to help Me"—"Deliver my soul from the Sword"—"Save me from the Lion's Mouth." Then we hear of the answer: "Thou hast answered Me from the horns of the wild-oxen." He was surrounded by the dogs (Gentiles) and the assembly of the wicked (Jews) as mentioned in verse 16, but now God has answered Him. The sufferings are ended and the glory begins. The horns of the wild-oxen denote power; the power of God answered Him and raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. We therefore behold Him at once as the risen One with a great declaration. "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren." And thus He spake after His passion and resurrection, "Go and tell my brethren that I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." This brings out the first great result of His finished work. It is the Church, His body, brought into this definite and blessed relationship with Himself. In the midst of the congregation (the Church) He sings praises. He is in the midst. "For both, He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." (Hebrews ii: 11–12.) And then the circle widens. Israel too will praise

Him, all the seed of Jacob will glorify Him. The ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord. All the kindreds of the nations will worship Him. He will receive the Kingdom and the Glory. Thus this Psalm, which begins with suffering, ends with Glory, a Glory yet to come for Israel and the nations of the earth.

PSALM XXIII.

Christ the great Shepherd.

1. Assurance (verses 1–3).
2. Comfort (verses 4–6).

Verses 1–3. Well has it been said "without Psalm xxii, there could be no Twenty-third Psalm." While the former Psalm reveals Christ as the good Shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep, this Psalm makes Him known as the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom the God of peace hath brought again from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. (Hebrews xiii: 20.) And all who deny the atoning work of Christ have no claim whatever upon the assurance and comfort of this Psalm.

But we must not overlook the fact that the first application of the Twenty-third Psalm must be made in connection with that godly remnant of Israel of a future day. While He is individually the Shepherd of all who trust in Him, He is also nationally the Shepherd of Israel. The Patriarch Jacob spoke of this when he said, "the God which fed me," or, literally, "my Shepherd." In Psalm lxxx: 1 the Lord is spoken of as being the Shepherd of Israel nationally, while in another Psalm the pious in Israel declare "we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hands." In Isaiah xl: 2 we have record of another national promise made to His people Israel — "He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd" and Micah calls Israel "the flock of Thine inheritance" (vii: 14). The entire xxxiv chapter of Ezekiel reveals Him as the

Shepherd and His future work when He will gather graciously the scattered sheep of Israel and lead them back to their own land. This Psalm has therefore a wider national application, especially in connection with the already mentioned godly remnant who look forward during the time of Jacob's trouble, the great tribulation, to His visible manifestation. It will be their comfort, when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, when their enemies arise threateningly on all sides. Then they will say, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with Me" and again "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Their hope is expressed in holy anticipation as dwelling finally in the house of the Lord forever, that is the hope of sharing the blessings and glories of the millennial reign.

Much has been written devotionally on this Psalm. Hundreds of books have been published, but it has never been exhausted nor ever will be. The Assurance of the first three verses belong to every believer on the Lord Jesus. He is individually the Shepherd and each child of God can say, "Jehovah is my Shepherd," the Shepherd who never fails, who never changeth, the Jehovah Jireh — the Lord who provides. He gives pasture, peace and rest, with the never failing waters, the supply of His Spirit. Then He restoreth after failure and leads in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.

Verses 4–6. And here is the comfort for all earthly circumstances, no matter where the path may be. Goodness and mercy are in store for all His sheep and the blessed goal to be with Him, not in an earthly house, where yet His glory is to dwell visibly, but in the Father's house with its many mansions.

A good way to read this Psalm is by asking the question, "What shall I not want?"

I shall not want —

Rest — for He makes me to lie down in green pastures.

Drink — for He leadeth me beside the still waters.

Forgiveness — for He restoreth my soul.

Guidance — for He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.

Companionship — for Thou art with me.

Comfort — for Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.

Food — for Thou preparest a table before me.

Victory — in the presence of mine enemies.

Joy — Thou anointest my head with oil.

Overrunning Joy — for my cup runneth over.

Everything in time — for goodness and mercy shall follow me.

Everything in eternity — for I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

PSALM XXIV.

The Chief Shepherd, the King of Glory.

1. Who shall dwell with Him when He comes? (verses 1–6).
2. The Glorious Manifestation of the King (verses 7–10).

Verses 1–6. This Psalm may have been composed and used on the occasion of the removal of the Ark from the house of Obed-Edom, to the city of David on Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi). It is a millennial Psalm and describes how the Lord will enter His glorious dwelling place on Mount Zion when He appears in power and in Glory. When the King comes back He will choose Zion for His glorious rest, as so many prophecies tell us, and reign from there, while another house of the Lord, the great millennial temple filled with His glory, will then be built. Who then shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? That these questions have nothing to do with the church, which at that time is as the glorified body with the Lord, is obvious. The character of those who will enter into His presence when He comes back to earth to dwell in Zion, and who will share the blessings of the kingdom, is that of practical righteousness, which is the fruit of faith. This company includes those Israelites who believed during the tribulation, who turned to the

Lord, and also the company of Gentiles who learn righteousness when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth. (Isaiah xxvi: 9.)

Verses 7–10. Here we have the glorious Manifestation and entry of the King into His House and dwelling place. It is a most sublime description. It has nothing to do with the ascension of our Lord; it is His glorious Return and Entry into the earthly Zion to fill it once more with His visible Glory. And the King of Glory is the Lord of Hosts. Jehovah of Hosts, He is the King of Glory. He who was forsaken on the Cross is now crowned with many crowns.

This Psalm concludes this series which so wonderfully tells out the Person and work of Christ.

PSALMS XXV–XXXIX.

The fifteen Psalms which follow give the deep soul exercise of the godly. All fifteen, except the thirty-third, are marked as Psalms of David. Much of it expresses undoubtedly his own individual experience during the days of his suffering and at other occasions. Prophetically these Psalms give again the experience of the godly remnant of Israel in the time of trouble, preceding the coming of the King. We also can trace in these experiences much which concerns our Lord in His earthly life, when as the Holy One He lived that perfect life of obedience and trust, suffering too among the ungodly. But great caution is needed in the application of these Psalms to our Lord. Here we find expressions which could never be true of Him, who knew no sin. For instance some have applied Psalm xxxviii: 7: "for my loins are filled with a loathsome disease and there is no soundness in my flesh" to the Lord Jesus, simply to sustain the theory that He carried literally our diseases in His body. This is positively wrong. His body was a holy body. Death had no claim on it nor could disease lay hold on that body. But many of these experiences are unquestionably the experiences of the Per-

fect and Righteous Man, the second Man, walking in the midst of sinners.

These fifteen Psalms are rich in spiritual food, yet it must always be remembered that strictly speaking it is not Christian experience, but the experience of Jews under the Law dispensation, and it needs spiritual discernment in using these utterances for ourselves with our heavenly calling and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. We give but one illustration of what we mean.

The much beloved xxxvii Psalm with its blessed promises which we as Christian believers have a right to enjoy and to claim contains the promise, "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (verse ii). This is promised to the godly Jews who will inherit the earth. The Church does not inherit the earth, but hers is a heavenly possession. When our Lord in the kingly proclamation, the sermon on the mount, said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," He quoted from the thirty-seventh Psalm. This promise has therefore nothing whatever to do with the church, but is a Kingdom promise for the godly in Israel.*

The scope of our work does not permit a detailed exposition of these 15 beautiful Psalms. We must leave it to the reader to ponder over them prayerfully and to enjoy their blessed comfort, yet always "dividing the Word of Truth rightly."

PSALM XXV.

Prayer for Mercy and Deliverance.

1. Dependence on the Lord (verses 1–7).
2. Confidence and Assurance (verses 8–14).
3. The Lord the Refuge in Trial and Distress (verses 15–22).

* It is deplorable that of late not a few of God's people have been confused by "new light" concerning the kingdom. This theory claims that John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus never offered the promised kingdom to Israel, but that the Kingdom of Heaven is equivalent with the present dispensation.

Verses 1–7. This is another alphabetical Psalm, though not perfect in structure as two letters of the Hebrew Alphabet (v and k) are missing. This great prayer-psalm begins with the expressions of trust in Jehovah. The soul is uplifted and calm in His presence. Depending on the Eternal One, the soul knows that none that wait on Him shall be ashamed. David found this true in his own experience; so have generations upon generations of His people, and the godly of Israel in the future will make the same experience. They will turn to Him and inquire for His ways, His paths and His truth. Here are their prayers: "Show me — Lead me — Teach me — Remember Thy mercies — Remember not my sins — Remember me." And He will answer, yea, He will remember their sins and iniquities no more and remember them in mercy. Our prayer as Christian believers is also for guidance, but we know that our sins are put away, that He hath saved us.

Verses 8–14. Here we find expressions of confidence and assurance. He guides the humble in judgment, He teaches the humble His way, a truth which all His people may well remember. The godly in Israel, fearing the Lord, express their confidence that their seed shall inherit the earth and that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." Yea, they know His secrets through His Word; this godly remnant will see and enjoy His covenant, the new covenant. (See Jeremiah xxxi: 31–34.)

Verses 15–20. They are in distress, a net has entangled their feet; they are desolate and afflicted, in affliction and pain, the burden of sin is upon them, enemies hate them with cruel hatred. They look away from self and from man and are turning their eyes only to the Lord. From Him their deliverance must come. "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." And that prayer will be answered.

PSALM XXVI.

An Appeal on account of Righteousness.

1. Pleading Integrity (verses 1–5).
2. Separated unto the Lord (verses 6–8).
3. Be gracious unto Me (verses 9–12).

Verses 1–5. The opening verses remind us of the first Psalm and well may we put these words into the lips of the perfect Man, who walked in integrity and was separate from sinners. Here we find no confessions of sin, no pleadings for forgiveness, but instead an avowal of conscious uprightness and separation from wicked men as well as love for His house and for the place where His honour dwells. It is the godly remnant pleading not exactly moral perfection, but uprightness of heart, which has led them apart from the apostate part of the nation. They hate the congregation of evil doers, and on account of this they look for divine vindication. No Christian believer pleads on such grounds with God. We plead that worthy Name, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 6–8. The washing of the hands in innocency is a Jewish figure. See Deut. xxi: 6. They cleanse themselves from defilement to approach His altar as the priests had to wash their hands and feet. Exodus xxx: 17–21.

Verses 9–12. Then their prayer — redeem me and be merciful unto me — gather not my soul with sinners — all the pleading of integrity of heart and separation from evil-doers has not produced assurance of acceptance, though in hope they look forward to the day when in the congregations they will bless the Lord. How different the assurance which Grace gives to us, that we are redeemed and the fullest mercy is on our side.

PSALM XXVII.

Holy Longings and Anticipations.

1. Confidence in the Lord (verses 1–3).
2. Longings and Anticipations (verses 4–6).
3. Earnest prayer in trial and trust in the Lord (verses 7–14).

Verses 1–3. This Psalm leads us deeper. We repeat that primarily it is a rehearsal of David's experience, perhaps at the time of Absalom's rebellion. Here faith breaks through in triumph, with deep longings for the house of the Lord and for His presence, which is followed by a description of the trials through which the godly Israelites will pass in the future. He is Light, Salvation and the Strength of Life; thus faith lays hold on the Lord and in view all fear and terror must vanish. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" It belongs to us all. Yet greater is the shout of faith uttered on the pinnacle of our great Salvation Epistle, Romans viii —"If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Verses 4–6. Heart longings and blessed anticipations follow. They long for the earthly sanctuary, we for our heavenly abode. Their desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord — to behold the beauty of the Lord — to inquire in His temple. And we too desire to be with Him, to behold Him face to face, and what it will mean then to inquire in His holy Temple! What it will be when up yonder we shall no longer look into a glass darkly! Then follows praise. Their heads will be lifted up —"therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto Jehovah." And while Israel will sing on earth when their earthly hope and deliverance has come, the praises of His church will fill the heavens above.

Verses 7–14. Once more we hear the cry in distress. The present trouble which is upon them comes into view.

They plead, "leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation"— a prayer which no true Christian believer needs to pray.

PSALM XXVIII

Prayer for Judgment and Praise for the Answer.

1. Prayer for Judgment (verses 1–5).
2. Praise for the Answer (verses 6–9).

Verses 1–5. Their cry now increaseth because of their enemies, the enemies of Israel in the last days. They breathe out cruelty to them (xxvii: 12). They pass through the valley of the shadow of death and if He does not answer and remains silent they be like those that go down to the pit. Hence the imprecatory prayer, "Give them according to their deeds, etc." (Verse 4.)

Verses 6–9. In faith the answer is anticipated and praise is given for it. The Psalm ends with a prayer. "Save thy people (Israel), and bless thine inheritance, and lift them up forever." The next Psalms bring the answer.

PSALM XXIX.

The Judgment Storm.

1. Give unto the Lord the Glory of His Name (verses 1–2).
2. The Day of the Lord described as a Thunderstorm (verses 4–9).
3. The Calm after the storm — the Lord is King (verses 10–11).

Verses 1–2. The voice of His trusting people is hushed; His voice is now heard. From Psalm xxv to xxviii we have seen the soul exercise of the remnant of Israel, we heard their prayers, we learned of their hopes and anticipations and of their trials and sorrows. Their last prayer in the preceding Psalm was "Save Thy people," and now He is seen arising to save them. His glory and strength, the Glory of His Name, is now to be manifested.

Verses 4–9. This is one of the most wonderful poetic descriptions we have in the Bible. The Day of the Lord, when He will be manifested in wrath and in mercy, is described under an onrushing thunderstorm. The mighty tempest passes from North to South. Jehovah thundereth, great waters sweep along, His voice is heard with power. The mighty cedars of Lebanon are broken by the fury of the storm. The Cedars of Lebanon are symbolical of the high and exalted things which will be broken to pieces in that day. (Read Isaiah ii: 11–14.) Lebanon and Sirion, the lofty mountains, skip like a young unicorn. The mountains will be shaken by mighty earthquakes and all the governments, typified by mountains, will also be shaken. He is manifested with flames of fire, the lightning of His righteousness, which ushers in His glorious reign. Then the hind is made to calve — it means Israel's new birth, while the forests (the nations) are stripped and laid low. And in His Temple, that greater house, whose maker He is, earth and heaven, " all that is therein uttereth Glory." (Literal transl.)

Verses 10–11. The Storm is past. The Lord has come. The Judgment flood is gone. Jehovah now has taken His throne. He is King and blesseth His people with Peace. The name of Jehovah is found 18 times in this Psalm and this Jehovah is our ever blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

PSALM XXX.

A Psalm of Praise.

1. Praise for Deliverance (verses 1–5).
2. The Past Experience (verses 6–12).

Verses 1–5. The inscription says that the Psalm was written by David as a song of dedication of the house. It probably means the house of the Lord mentioned in 1 Chron. xxii: 1. The Psalm must be looked upon as expressing prophetically the praise of the nation for the

deliverance and when that greater house of the Lord will be on the earth. (Ezek. xl, etc.) David's experience, of course, stands in the foreground. It is generally assumed that David was sick unto death and that the Lord raised him up. But this foreshadows the experience of the remnant of Israel. They approached the pit, while their foes were ready to rejoice over them, but the Lord intervened, and they were saved and healed. Then the singing begins. (Verse 4.) Weeping had endured for a night, the dark night of tribulation, but joy came with the morning, that blessed morning for which all is waiting, when the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

Verses 6–12. This is a rehearsal of the experiences through which they passed. Mourning for them is turned into dancing; the sackcloth is taken off and the garments of joy and gladness are put on. Then His Glory will be manifested and will sing His Praise throughout Israel's land and the whole earth will be filled with His Glory.

PSALM XXXI.

The Enemies of Israel and the Victory.

1. The Prayer for Deliverance (verses 1–18).
2. The Victory (verses 19–24).

Verses 1–18. Many Saints have turned to this Psalm for encouragement in time of trouble and sorrow. And there is much in it which helps the trusting soul. Notice the different names of Jehovah — my rock — my house of defense — my strong rock — my fortress — my Strength — God of Truth. But like the previous Psalms this one also unfolds prophetically the sufferings of the remnant of Israel during the last days of this age.

Yet likewise we may think of Him who endured the contradiction of sinners. The words "into thine hand I commit my spirit" were used by our Lord when He laid down His life on the cross. (Luke xxiii: 46.)

Verses 19–24. The outcome of all the suffering and

trials will be victory for the godly. His goodness will be displayed in their behalf; He will answer the voice of their supplications in the coming great deliverance. The faithful ones will be preserved, the proud rewarded for their evil deeds.

PSALM XXXII.

Fullest Blessing.

1. The Blessedness of Righteousness Imputed (verses 1–5).
2. The Blessedness of Hiding-place (verses 6–7).
3. The Blessedness of Guidance and Preservation (verses 8–11).

Verses 1–5. This is the first of the 13 Maschil Psalms, the Psalms of special instruction. They tell us of the understanding which the godly in Israel will have in spiritual things (see Daniel xii: 10). All these Maschil Psalms have reference to the last days. The foundation of this Psalm is David's own experience. See the application of it in Romans iv. This blessedness of being justified by faith, and all that is included, will be the portion also of the godly in Israel during the end of the age, after the true Church has been caught up. They will pass through David's experience and enjoy the "sure mercies of David."

Verses 6–7. And the Justifier is the Hiding-place, the Refuge. As He is now the Hiding-place for His trusting people, so will He be their Hiding-place. The floods of great waters point clearly to the great tribulation. They will be preserved as it is written concerning this godly remnant by Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as if it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." (Isaiah xxvi: 20.)

Verses 8–11. Then the blessedness of Guidance and Preservation. His eye will rest upon them and with His eye He will guide them, as He watches over and guides all His people. And finally the righteous kept and delivered will shout for joy.

PSALM XXXIII.

The Future Praise of Jehovah.

1. The Call to Praise Jehovah (verses 1–3).
2. His Praise as the Creator (verses 4–9).
3. His Praise of His Governmental Dealings (verses 10–17).
4. His Praise as the Keeper and Deliverer of the Righteous (verses 19–22).

What the last verse of the preceding Psalm exhorts to shout for joy, is in this Psalm more fully unfolded. Such praise the Lord has not yet received, it looks forward to millennial times when all the earth fears the Lord and all the inhabitants stand in awe of Him (verse 8). Now they oppose and defy Him and His Word. Then the counsel of the nations will be brought to nought and His people Israel, His own nation, will be blessed. The last verse is a prayer that His mercy may be bestowed upon His people Israel, who hope in Him.

PSALM XXXIV.

The Perfect Praise of His Redeemed People.

1. His Praise for Salvation (verses 1–10).
2. The Instructions of the Righteous (verses 11–16).
3. His Redemption Remembered (verses 17–22).

This is another alphabetical Psalm, only one letter is omitted. It is primarily the praise of David after his escape from Gath, as the inscription tells us. Prophetically it is the Praise of His redeemed and delivered people, delivered from all their fears (verse 4) and saved out of all their troubles (verse 6). Such will be their worship and praise in the coming day, while they themselves will be teachers and instructors in righteousness. (Verses 12–16; see 1 Peter iii: 10–12.)

Verse 20 is a literal prophecy concerning our Lord and was literally fulfilled (John xix: 36). But the believer also can claim this promise, for we are His bones. "It

intimates to the believer the limitation within which the power of the oppressor is confined, with whom he is in ceaseless conflict. As the same Scripture which contains the record of Messiah's sufferings provided also that no bone of Him should be broken, so it is with the Saint." They will be kept by His own power. The last two verses of this Psalm shows the judgment of the wicked and the deliverance of the righteous in that day. We have seen once more how Psalm is linked with Psalm.

PSALM XXXV.

The Cry for Justice and Divine Help.

1. The Cry of Distress (verses 1–10).
2. The Contrast? (verses 11–18).
3. Prayer for Vindication and Victory (verses 19–28).

This Psalm introduces us again to the suffering of the righteous, giving another prophetic picture of the distress of the remnant. When David composed this Psalm we do not know. But He casts himself completely on the Lord and calls to Him for help and vindication. Thus the godly have always done when surrounded by the enemies who persecuted them. The condition of the godly when violence is in the earth during the time of Jacob's trouble is here fully pictured, and their prayers prewritten by the Spirit of God. They look to Him to fight against their enemies, so that they may be confounded and put to shame, that they might be like the chaff before the wind, driven away. These are imprecatory petitions, such as a Christian is not authorized to pray, but these petitions will be perfectly justified in those final days, when judgment is decreed upon the enemies of God. The godly act in righteousness towards the wicked, but they reward evil for good, showing that they are ripe for judgment. And therefore their plea, "How long, O Lord, wilt Thou look on?" (verse 17). "Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions." This re-

minds us of the xxii Psalm where this expression applies to our Lord. The remnant suffers with Him. And then their faith looks forward to the time of vindication and victory.

PSALM XXXVI.

Contrasts.

1. What the wicked is and does (verses 1–4).
2. What Jehovah is and does (verses 5–9).
3. Prayer and Trust in His loving kindness (verses 10–12).

The wicked are described in their wickedness, with sin in the heart, no fear of God; filled with pride and flattery, speaking evil and doing evil. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Tim. iii: 13.) This is the Divine forecast for the last days and these opening verses of this psalm show the wicked of the last days. But what a Lord He is whom they do not fear! What a contrast! And the righteous know His mercy, His faithfulness, His righteousness and His judgment. Only good is in store from His side for those who trust in Him. His lovingkindness is excellent, He covers them with the shadow of His wings, He satisfies them abundantly with the fatness of His house. Such will be the hope and comfort of the godly when the wicked wax worse and worse, till the day comes when the workers of iniquity shall fall, unable to rise again.

PSALM XXXVII.

The Blessed Lot of the Righteous contrasted with the Wicked.

1. Waiting for Jehovah and His Promise (verses 1–11).
2. The Doom of the Wicked and the Portion of the Righteous (verses 12–20).
3. The Ways of the Righteous and the Wicked (verses 21–29).
4. God's gracious Ways with the Righteous (verses 30–40).

This Psalm is also Alphabetical in structure and somewhat proverbial in character. It is full of sweet comfort and encouragement to faith. All the Saints of God have fed on its beautiful statements, and the coming Saints of Israel will find help and strength in it for their souls. He who trusts in the Lord and waits for Him needs not to fret on account of evil-doers; they will soon be cut off. But what is the righteous man to do? Trust in the Lord — Delight thyself in Him — Commit thy way unto the Lord — Rest in the Lord. If God's people will but do this all is well, for He who never faileth adds His promises. He promises safety, the fulfilment of the heart's desire; He will bring it to pass and bring forth righteousness as the light. Waiting for the Lord will end for the godly of that coming day, when the evil-doers will be cut off in judgment and when those who waited on the Lord shall inherit the earth. This is Israel's promise which will be realized for the godly remnant when the Lord appears in glory in their midst. These brief hints will help in the study of the entire Psalm. It must be looked upon as prophetic, pointing to the day when the wicked troubles no more, when his end is come and when the Lord exalts the righteous to inherit the land.

PSALM XXXVIII.

The Suffering Saint and Confession of Sin.

1. Suffering and Humiliation (verses 1–8).
2. Looking to the Lord (verses 9–15).
3. Confession and Prayer (verses 16–20).

This Psalm is read by the Jews on the Day of Atonement. It pictures great suffering in body and soul; it reminds us in different ways of the Book of Job. (See and compare verse 2 with Job vi: 4; verse 4 with Job xxiii: 2; verse 11 with Job xix: 13; the loathsome disease, with no soundness in the flesh, also reminds of Job's experience.) And the suffering one looks to Jehovah, He is

his hope. He confesses his sins, pleads, "Make haste to help me, O Lord of my salvation." And that cry will always be answered.

PSALM XXXIX.

Deep Soul Exercise in view of Man's Frailty and Nothingness.

1. The Vanity of Life (verses 1–6).
2. Self-Judgment and Prayer (verses 7–13).

This Psalm is connected closely with the preceding one and shows deep soul exercises. In the midst of trial, with God's hand resting upon the sufferer, he had been silent before his enemies. Before the Lord he did not maintain silence but pours out his heart, confessing the vanity of his fleeting life which appears to him as a hand-breadth and altogether vanity. Beautiful is verse 7. "And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee." All else the Saint waits for in this little life down here is vanity except the Lord. These two Psalms have also their special application to the suffering remnant, who learn the vanity of all things and wait for the Lord only.

PSALMS XL AND XLI.

PSALM XL.

Christ the Obedient One and the Fruit of His Work.

1. The Path of the Obedient One (verses 1–12).
2. His Prayer and His Comfort (verses 13–17).

Verses 1–12. The Fortieth and Forty-first Psalms are Messianic. Our Redeemer and Israel's Redeemer is blessedly revealed in them both and with the testimony to Him the first Book of the Psalms closes. Psalm xl begins with what may be termed "Christ's resurrection song." He came and went as the sin-bearer into the horrible pit (Hebrew: the pit of destruction) and the miry clay, and the

power of God brought Him out, raised Him from the dead, set His feet upon a rock and established His goings (His ascension). A new song is put into His mouth, "even praise unto our God." It is the song of redemption which He sings first and all who believe on Him join in that song. That is why we read "our God." The many who shall see it are those who trust in Him who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. And who can tell out the wonderful works He has done in redemption; "they are more than can be numbered." Verses 6–8 are quoted in Hebrews x. The ears opened, literally "digged ears," refers us to Exodus xxi. The N. T. quotes the Septuagint translation, made undoubtedly with the sanction of the Holy Spirit, "a body hast Thou prepared Me." In verses 13–17 we hear Him pray as the sin-bearer of His people, as we hear Him say in verse 12 that the sins He bore are more than the hairs upon His head. The doom of those who reject and despise Him, and the blessing of all who love His salvation are likewise mentioned.

PSALM XLI.

Faith and Unbelief in View of the Cross.

1. Faith in Him and the Results (verses 1–3).
2. Unbelief and its Hatred (verses 4–9).
3. The Vindication of the Christ of the Cross (verses 10–13).

The Poor One (literally: the miserable, exhausted One) is the Lord Jesus suffering on the Cross. Blessed are they who understand as to Him, who consider Him, for it means deliverance, salvation, preservation, victory and happiness. But unbelief mocks and sneers at Him. They speak against Him, make evil devices against Him, the sin-bearer, that an evil disease (literally: a thing of Belial) is upon Him and that He shall rise no more. All this points back to the cross and is still true of the unbeliever who rejects the Cross. Verse 9 refers to Judas

who betrayed Him. See John xiii: 18 and notice when our Lord quotes from this Psalm He omits the words "whom I trusted," for the Omniscient One knew Judas, and did not trust him. And He, the poor and needy One, the miserable One, the Forsaken One, had His prayer answered; He is the risen One (verse 10); in God's own presence, before His face (verse 12). The first Book of the Psalms ends with Praise, prophetic of the Praise which is yet to fill all the earth. Amen and Amen.

THE SECOND BOOK.

PSALMS XLII-LXXII.

The second Division of the Book of Psalms corresponds to the Book of Exodus, the second Book of the Pentateuch. That book begins with the groans and moans of a suffering people in Egypt and after redemption by blood and by power, ends with the Glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle when the work was finished. Ruin, oppression, suffering and sorrow, ending in deliverance and redemption, is the order in which the Psalms in this section are arranged. It is a most interesting study and we regret that we cannot enter into all the details, to explore these mines of prophecy. The oppressed, persecuted people, who suffer surrounded by the ungodly, is that same godly remnant of Israelites. Their deliverance comes by the visible manifestation of the Lord, the second coming of our Lord. The Psalm which concludes this Exodus of the Psalms is the lxxii, the great Kingdom Psalm, when His Kingdom has come and the King reigns in righteousness.

PSALMS XLII-XLIX.

These 8 Psalms form the first section. Here the remnant is seen in great distress, having fled from Jerusalem on account of wickedness during the time of the great tribulation (Daniel xii: 1), longing for deliverance.

Then we learn how that deliverance comes by the manifestation of the King and the results which follow that deliverance.

PSALM XLII.

Longing after God in the midst of Distress.

1. Longing after God and His Sanctuary (verses 1–6).
2. Distress and the Comfort of Hope (verses 7–11).

This is the second Maschil Psalm, for instruction of the godly of that day. The remnant looks towards the sanctuary, the house of God, from which they are separated and driven away. They are panting after God, as the hart panteth after the water brooks. Their cry comes from "the land of Jordan"— Jordan, the type of death, and from the Hermons (which means "ban"), from the hill Mizar (littleness). The enemy taunts, "Where is thy God?" For them deep calleth unto deep and they cry out "all thy waves and billows are gone over me." They suffer with Him, bearing His reproach, over whose blessed head the waves and billows also passed. "Why hast Thou forgotten me?" they cry to God and remind Him of the oppression of the enemy. Yet Hope and trust fills their soul.

PSALM XLIII.

The cry against the Ungodly Nation and Antichrist.

1. The Cry to God (verses 1–2).
2. Send out Thy Light and Truth (verses 3–5).

Here their enemies are mentioned, the ungodly nation, serving the Beast (Revel. xiii: 11–18). The deceitful and unjust man, is that coming man of sin, the son of perdition, who then has taken his seat in the temple of God in Jerusalem. (2 Thess. ii.) They realize their help must come from the Lord to lead them to the holy hill and the sanctuary. They call for the coming of Him who is "the Light and the Truth."

PSALM XLIV.

The Increased Cry for Deliverance.

1. My King, O God! Command Deliverances (verses 1–8).
2. Trouble upon Trouble and Confusion (verses 9–21).
3. Awake! Arise for our Help! (verses 22–26).

The third Maschil Psalm. They remember the days of old, what God did for His covenant people in the past, how He gave them the land with an outstretched arm and delivered them from their enemies. They own Him as King and call on Him to command deliverances for Jacob. Then they utter their complaint and describe the great troubles and calamities they are facing; they are spoiled, like sheep appointed for meat, scattered, scorned and derided. Yet they have not forgotten Him. Then follows the cry for the Deliverer and for deliverance. "Arise for our help, and redeem us for Thy mercies sake."

PSALM XLV.

The Answer. The King Messiah and His Glory.

1. The King in His Majesty and Power (verses 1–5).
2. His Throne and His Glory (verses 6–8).
3. With the King, Sharing His Glory and Kingdom (verses 9–17).

This beautiful Psalm, a perfect gem, gives the answer to the prayer of distress, "Arise for our help," with which the preceding Psalm closed. It is also a Maschil Psalm and a traditional view claims Solomon as the author. And how the Critics have laboured, without success, to explain away its Messianic meaning! The Jews have borne witness to this fact. The Chaldean Targum paraphrases verse 2 by saying, "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than that of the sons of men." And the eminent Jewish expositor Aben-Ezra says, "This Psalm treats of David, or rather of his son the Messiah." But the first chapter in the Hebrew Epistle establishes forever that the Lord Jesus Christ is here prophetically re-

vealed. It has the inscription "upon Shoshannim" (Lilies). Here the theory that the inscriptions belong to preceding Psalms breaks down, for He is the Lily of the valley, revealed now as the King, the Beloved One.

What sublime descriptions of the Person of our Lord! Here is His perfect Humanity, fairer than the children of men, with grace poured into His lips. His kingly Glory, His manifestation in Glory, executing the vengeance of God upon His enemies and delivering His waiting people. Here is His Deity, for the King is God, "Thy Throne, O God, is forever"; His Cross, He loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and the oil of gladness which is upon Him in resurrection glory, and His fellows share His glory. He receives the Kingdom. With Him is the Queen at His right hand in gold of Ophir, the Lamb's wife, to share His rule and reign with Him. The King's daughter is Israel, now all glorious within, born again, with garments of wrought gold, the symbol of glory. Her companions are nations now brought to the King. From henceforth the Name, which is above every other Name, will be remembered and His people will praise Him forever and ever.

PSALM XLVI.

The Deliverance and what follows.

1. God is our Refuge and Strength (verses 1–3).
2. His Coming in Power and Glory (verses 4–7).
3. What follows His Manifestation (verses 8–11).

This is "a song upon Alamoth," which means "maidens' voices" and calls to remembrance the song which Miriam and the women sang when the Lord redeemed His people by power at the Red Sea. The remnant delivered relates prophetically the experience of deliverance. They trusted in God as their refuge and strength, though the earth was moved and the mountains carried into the sea. Then He appeared and helped His people "at the dawn of the morning." The nations raged, the kingdoms were

moved — then His voice was heard, while His people shouted " Jehovah of hosts is with us." They call next to behold the desolations which judgment has wrought. Then, and only then follows peace and all wars are ended. " He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth, He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear asunder."

PSALM XLVII.

He is King over all the earth.

1. In the midst of His People (verses 1–5).
2. The Praise of His Delivered People (verses 6–9).

And now we see prophetically how the redeemed people clap their hands and shout unto God with the voice of triumph, for Messiah is King and then they sing praises unto the King, for He is King over all the earth and highly exalted. Every knee must bow and every tongue confess.

PSALM XLVIII.

The Judgment of the Nations and the Millennium.

1. Jerusalem the City of the King (verses 1–3).
2. The Confederated Nations scattered (verses 4–7).
3. The Millennium (verses 8–14).

Jerusalem is now seen as the city of the great King. His glorious throne will there be established, and Mount Zion becomes the joy of the whole earth. Verses 4–7 show what preceded the coming of the King. The nations had come against Jerusalem (Zech. xiv), a mighty confederacy was assembled. He came and scattered them by His judgments. Then Jerusalem is established forever; His millennial reign begins.

PSALM XLIX.

Retrospects and Meditations.

1. Hear this, all ye Peoples! (verses 1–4).
2. His Message of Retrospect and Encouragement (verses 5–20).

If such is the outcome and the goal of the purposes of God concerning His People, why should they fear in the days of evil, which precede the coming glory? The ungodly will pass away no matter how great their riches are, nor can they redeem themselves; their way is folly; like sheep they are laid in the grave and death feeds on them. But different is the lot of the righteous. They shall have dominion over them in the morning, when the night of suffering and trouble is ended. They will be redeemed from the power of the grave and He shall receive them, " for He will swallow up death in Victory."

PSALMS L AND LI.

PSALM L.

The Demands of a Righteous God.

1. His Coming and His Call (verses 1–6).
2. The God of Israel Speaks (verses 7–13).
3. The Demands of Righteousness (verses 16–21).

Psalms l and li belong together. In the first God is described coming to Israel, proclaiming His righteousness and demanding righteousness from His people and in the second Israel makes confession of sin. Psalm l is by Asaph. He describes the Lord shining out of Zion, coming in glory as the righteous Judge to judge His people. When the Lord appears His people will be gathered in His presence, for He has a controversy with them; He declares unto them the righteousness which He as their God requires. He does not want their ritual services, sacrifices and offerings, but He requires that which is the fruit of true faith, the sacrifice of thanksgiving and practical

righteousness of life. He uncovers their moral condition and warns, "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

PSALM LI.

The Confession.

1. Conviction and Prayer for Forgiveness (verses 1–8).
2. Prayer for Cleansing and Restoration (verses 9–13).
3. Bloodguiltiness acknowledged (verses 14–19).
4. Prayer for Zion (verses 18–19).

This great penitential Psalm, according to the inscription, was the outburst of confession and repentance of David when Nathan had uncovered his sin. Well has it been said, "So profound a conviction of sin, so deep and unfeigned a penitence, so true a confession, a heart so tender, so contrite, a desire so fervent for renewal, a trust so humble, so filial in the forgiving love of God, are such as we might surely expect from 'the man after God's own heart.'" We cannot enter into all the petitions and expressions of sorrow over sin which are found in this remarkable Psalm. It goes deep in confession and brokenness of spirit. All the Saints of God know something of such deep soul exercises on account of sin.

We point out the prophetic meaning of the Psalm. It is the future Confession of Israel of their sin and especially their bloodguiltiness which is upon that nation. It is therefore the answer of penitent Israel to the words of the righteous Judge in the preceding Psalm. David had bloodguiltiness upon him. And when the Jews delivered the Holy One into the hands of the Gentiles they cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." This bloodguiltiness will then be confessed when the Lord comes, when they look upon Him whom they pierced and shall mourn for Him. (Zech. xii: 10.) Isaiah liii is a similar confession which Israel will yet make. It will be the time of their deep contrition, national repentance and weeping.

Then they will become the teachers of the Gentiles, to teach transgressors His ways, that sinners be converted unto Him. They will sing aloud of His righteousness, when the Lord has taken away their sins. Then they will bring sacrifices of righteousness and the Lord will do good to Zion and build Jerusalem.

PSALMS LII–LV.

PSALM LII.

The Proud and Boasting Man.

1. The Character of the Man of Sin (verses 1–7).
2. The Character of the Righteous (verses 8–9).

The four Psalms which follow (all Mashil Psalms) give mostly a prophetic picture of the Man of sin, the final Antichrist, the false Messiah-king, under whom the godly in Israel will especially suffer. He is first described as the mighty man, the super-man, who boasts in evil. He is also a lying, deceitful man, "working deceitfully" and having a "deceitful tongue." But God is going to deal with him, destroy him forever, take him away, pluck him out of his dwelling place, and out of the land of the living. He will be destroyed with the brightness of the Lord's Coming. (2 Thes. ii: 8.)

PSALM LIII.

The Apostasy under the Man of Sin.

This Psalm is in greater part the same as the fourteenth. It is the description of the apostasy, the complete turning away from God and opposition to God, which will hold sway when Satan's mighty man is on the earth. Then the godly remnant will sigh for the coming of salvation out of Zion.

PSALM LIV.

The Prayer of the Godly.

1. The Prayer for Salvation (verses 1–3).
2. The Assurance of Faith (verses 4–7).

During that final Apostasy when the Man of Sin is revealed, the Saints among the Jews will suffer persecution as the prophetic Word elsewhere reveals. Here is another prophetic record of their prayers, with a believing anticipation of deliverance.

PSALM LV.

In the Throes of the Great Tribulation.

1. Prayer for Help (verses 1–3).
2. Longings to Escape (verses 4–8).
3. The Great Tribulation (verses 9–21).
4. The Comfort of Hope (verses 22–23).

The man of sin, the Antichrist, stands out prominently in this Psalm. Because of him and his oppression, the godly remnant calls for help. They are overwhelmed with horror and beholding the abomination, they wish for wings like a dove and escape from the storm and the tempest of the great tribulation. This is in accordance with Matthew xxiv: 15–16, which refers to the same time. They will actually flee to the mountain and will be away from Jerusalem as we learned in Psalm xlii. The great tribulation has begun and of Jerusalem it will be true " wickedness is in the midst thereof, deceit and guile depart not from her streets." And this wicked one, the Antichrist, is one of the nation, not a stranger, the man with a flattering tongue, who even walked in the house of God. And now his character and the character of his followers is exposed as they turn against the godly. Hence the imprecatory prayer (verse 15). Here is the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy, the last seven years, divided into half. In the first half the Antichrist is the man who claims

friendship, with words smooth as butter, but in the middle of the week he breaks the covenant and puts his hands against such as are at peace with him. (Verse 20.)

PSALMS LVI–LX.

PSALM LVI.

The Faithfulness of God, the Comfort of His People

1. Trust and Comfort (verses 1–9).
2. Praise for Anticipated Deliverance (verses 10–13).

These five Psalms which are grouped together are Michtam Psalms. This one was written by David when the Philistines took him at Gath. The inscription Jonath-elem-rechokim has been rendered by the Septuagint translators as "upon the people driven afar from the holy place," the literal rendering is, "The dove of silence in far off places." On account of the great tribulation, the abomination in Jerusalem, seen in the previous Psalm, the godly have left the city and here we have the expressions of their trust in the faithfulness of their God. Whatever the enemy may do they can say in all their wanderings and with all their tears, "Thou tellest my wanderings, put Thou my tears into Thy bottle, are they not in Thy Book?" Blessed comfort is ours too.

PSALM LVII.

Perfect Trust in God.

1. Sheltered until the Trouble is Past (verses 1–5).
2. Deliverance and Praise (verses 6–11).

The inscription is Al-taschith, which means "Destroy not"; it is the Michtam of David when he fled from Saul. It shows us once more the exercise of faith in the godly of Israel. In the shadow of His wings they take refuge till these calamities are overpast. They look for intervention from above, from where it will surely come at the close of

the days of tribulation. "He shall send from heaven, and save me." Then they know they will be delivered in anticipation of which the voice of praise is heard. "Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, let Thy glory cover all the earth."

PSALM LVIII.

A Judgment Psalm.

1. Why God must Judge (verses 1–5).
2. The Judgment Executed (verses 6–11).

"Do ye of a truth in silence speak righteousness?" (Literal rendering of the first verse). Righteousness is not heard on earth. Wickedness and violence are on the earth, therefore God must arise and deal with these conditions in judgment. It will overtake the wicked and the imprecatory prayers will be answered. Then the righteous will be glad when he seeth the vengeance and it will be said, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily He is a God who judgeth the earth."

PSALM LIX.

Gentile Enmity against Israel.

1. Surrounded by Nations (verses 1–8).
2. Their Judgment Anticipated (verses 9–17).

Another Michtam of David when he was persecuted by Saul. While in previous Psalms we saw prophetically the remnant of the last days suffering from their own ungodly brethren and the Antichrist, here the nations are their enemies. The word "Heathen" should always be translated nations. They will surround Jerusalem. This is mentioned in verse 6. They are like the dogs, the term used for Gentiles in the Word. The godly pray for deliverance and in faith sing of His power —"I will sing aloud of Thy mercy in the Morning"— that coming morning when the shadows flee away.

PSALM LX.

The Lord with His People.

1. Confessions and Prayer (verses 1–5).
2. The Inheritance Anticipated (verses 6–8).
3. Faith's Certainty (verses 9–12).

This Psalm, "Shushan-Eduth" (the lily of testimony), also a Michtam of David, has for its beginning a confession of the godly in Israel. The Lord they acknowledge had scattered them and is angry with them. They pray for restoration. "That thy beloved may be delivered, save with Thy right hand and hear me." Then He hears and answers in His holiness and His people rejoice as once more they possess their earthly inheritance. The casting of the shoe upon Edom means the subjugation of Edom, taking possession and making Edom a servant.

PSALMS LXI–LXVIII.

PSALM LXI.

The Identification of the King with His People.

1. His Cry and their Cry (verses 1–4).
2. His Answer and Exaltation (verses 5–8).

These 8 Psalms are grouped together leading up again to the final deliverance of Israel and the Glory of the Lord. The question in connection with this Psalm is, who is the King whose years shall be from generations to generations, that is forever, who shall abide in God's presence forever? The ancient Jewish Targum says it is King Messiah, which is the true answer. This is the key to this Psalm. The King, Christ, is seen as identified with the remnant. He walked on earth trusting, having as the dependent Man His shelter in God. And so does the godly remnant trust and fleeing to the rock which is higher than they, find their shelter there also. And when the King comes back they will have their full deliverance.

PSALM LXII.

Waiting and Trusting.

1. He Only (verses 1–2).
2. Persecuted (verses 3–4).
3. My Expectation from Him (verses 5–12).

This Psalm is not difficult to interpret. It has always been food for the Saints of God. Faith in God in the midst of adversity and persecution, waiting on Him, expecting salvation, deliverance and defense only from Him is beautifully expressed. Like all these Psalms this one also gives us a prophetic glimpse into the experience of the remnant of Israel. But it has its practical value for us likewise. The first verse literally rendered is, " Only unto God my soul is silence —" that is hushed in His presence, in confident submission. To expect all from Him, nothing from man, to look away from self and magnify the Lord, is the secret of a life of rest and victory.

PSALM LXIII.

Heart-longings.

1. To see Thy Power and Glory (verses 1–4).
2. Satisfied Longings (verses 5–11).

A Psalm of David when he was an outcast in the wilderness of Judah. Thus it fits in well with the outcast remnant, thirsting after God, longing to see His Power and His Glory displayed. And these longings are created in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, as in our hearts also. These longings will be satisfied in the coming day of His manifestation, when His people shall praise and worship Him.

PSALM LXIV.

The Wicked and their End.

1. The Power of the Wicked Displaced (verses 1–6).
2. Their Sudden End (verses 7–10).

This Psalm stands in contrast with the preceding ones. The outward circumstances, the deeds and power of the wicked, are seen again. But suddenly the Lord will act and strike down the wicked. He will avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him. (See Luke xviii: 1–7. The widow in this parable is the godly Israelitish remnant.)

PSALM LXV.

The Times of Restitution and Refreshing.

1. Spiritual Blessings (verses 1–5).
2. Earthly Glories and Blessing (verses 6–13).

The four next Psalms unfold prophetically the times of restitution of all things as spoken by the mouth of His holy Prophets since the world began. Here we get the visions of Israel's restoration, her spiritual blessings and her praise unto the Lord. and what will be the result for the nations and for all creation. We recommend a careful study in details by comparing Scripture with Scripture. In this Psalm Zion is mentioned first. It will be the joy of the whole earth and His Praises will sound forth from the glorious place of His rest. Then He who answereth prayer unto Him, who is the Desire of all nations, all flesh will come. The nations will be gathered into the kingdom. Israel's transgression will be purged away and they will be fitted to draw near and be satisfied with the blessings of His house, that future holy Temple which will be filled with His Glory. (Ezekiel xliii.) The terrible things in righteousness with which the Lord has answered the pleadings of His suffering people, are His judgments, the vengeance of God. The results will be "Peace on earth, Who stilleth the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of nations." Verses 9–13 show that the curse which rests now upon creation will then be removed and even creation itself will shout for joy and sing.

PSALM LXVI.

The Praise and Worship of the Millennium.

1. What God hath Wrought! (verses 1–7).
2. Israel's Praise and Worship (verses 8–20).

"Shout aloud unto God, all the earth! Sing the Glory of His Name, ascribe to Him glory, in His praise." This will be done in the coming Kingdom age. And Israel will be the leader of that praise, calling upon the nations to join into the glory song. "All the earth shall worship Thee, and shall sing unto Thee, they shall sing Thy Name, Israel will worship in the beauty of holiness, and this people, now a holy nation and kingdom of priests, become His witnesses." Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul."

PSALM LXVII.

The Fullest Blessing.

This brief Psalm does not permit any division. It is closely linked with the preceding one, telling us of the fullest blessings in store for Israel and the whole earth, when the new day has dawned and the King reigns. If this little Psalm in its prophetic message were understood it would end forever all postmillennial misconceptions as to the conversion of the world. Israel prays that the Lord may be gracious to them as He will in that coming day. As a result of Israel's conversion by the coming of the Lord, His way will be known upon the earth and His salvation among the nations. Then the peoples will praise, and the nations will be glad and rejoice. The Lord will be King of nations (verse 4) and the earth yield her increase. Here is God's way for the full Blessing, the earth and the race needs. Israel prays "God shall bless us" and as the result "all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." But Israel's Blessing is inseparably connected

with the return of our Lord. No Blessing and Restoration till He comes again.

PSALM LXVIII.

The Great Redemption Accomplished.

1. The Introduction (verses 1–3).
2. The Proclamation of His Name and of His Acts (verses 4–6).
3. A Historic Review (verses 7–17).
4. Israel's Place of Blessing and the Redeemer (verses 13–19).
5. His Victory over the Enemies (verses 20–23).
6. The Great Procession (verses 24–29).
7. The Conversion of the Nations and the Kingdom (verses 30–35).

This is one of the greatest Psalms. The Name of God is found in it in seven different forms: Jehovah, Adonai, El, Shaddai, Jah, Jehovah-Adonai and Jah-Elohim. The opening verses mention three great facts of the accomplished redemption. God arises — the enemies are scattered — the righteous rejoice. See Numb. x: 35. Praise then begins. Verse 4 correctly rendered is "Sing unto God, sing forth His Name, Cast up a way for Him that rideth in the deserts" (not heavens). See also Isaiah lxii: 10. The word used for deserts (Araboth) refers to the regions south of Jerusalem, Jordan and the Dead Sea. The One who comes as the glorious King is He who hath passed through the scenes of death and has the power to lead from death to life. He delivers His earthly people who waited for Him, while the rebellious dwell in a parched land. The manifestation of the God of Israel at Sinai (verse 7, etc.) is the type of His future manifestation. Verse 13, "Though ye have lain among the sheepfolds (Israel) — Wings of a Dove Covered with silver and greenish gold." The Dove, as the sacrificial bird, is a type of Christ, but it is also applied to godly Israel in the Song of Solomon, when they are addressed as "O my dove." It applies therefore to both. The wings are covered with silver and gold. Silver stands for redemption

and the greenish gold, the finest, for Glory. Christ has brought redemption and Glory, and under His blessed wings, Israel, enjoys and possesseth both. Then the mount of God where His Glory will be seen where He dwells forever. Verse 18 is quoted in Ephesians iv: 8. He, the Redeemer of Israel, had descended first into the lower parts of the earth, even into the depths of death and the grave. Then he ascended into glory. But notice, it saith here that this ascended One received gifts for men, but in Ephesians we read that He communicates that which He hath received as the risen and glorified One. The Holy Spirit adds to it in Ephesians. But He also omits something. He leaves out "even for the rebellious." This refers to rebellious Israel and has no place in the Epistle which concerns the church alone. Then His victory over the enemies and the lawless leader, the Antichrist. (Verses 20–23.) The wonderful procession, He the triumphant leader, the head of the new Creation. (Verses 24–29.) And finally the world and the nations bowing before Him. There will be a Temple in Jerusalem once more, as we saw before. The Kings of the earth will go there to worship and to bring presents. And then Peace on earth, true peace, lasting peace, universal peace, which the world tries to have now while we write this, without the Prince of Peace. "He scattereth the peoples that delight in war." (Verse 30.) Peace on earth in the Psalms always follows the visible and glorious Manifestation of the King.

PSALMS LXIX-LXXII.

PSALM LXIX.

The Suffering and Rejected Christ.

1. Hated without a Cause (verses 1–6).
2. Bearing Reproach (verses 7–12).
3. His Own Prayer (verses 13–21).
4. The Retribution (verses 22–28).
5. His Exaltation and the Glory (verses 29–36).

These four Psalms go together and lead us prophetically from the suffering and rejected Christ to the Glory of His Kingdom in the lxxii Psalm. The Sixty-ninth Psalm, like the Forty-fifth, bears the inscription upon Shoshanim (lilies). It concerns Christ and indirectly also the people who suffer for His sake. The Spirit of God in the N. T. quotes this Psalm repeatedly. See Verse 4 and John xv: 25; verse 9 and John ii: 17 and Romans xv: 3; verses 22–23 and Romans xi: 9–10; verse 25 and Acts i: 20. Verse 21 was literally fulfilled as we find from the Gospels, Matthew xxvii: 34, 48; Mark xv: 23, 36; Luke xxiii: 36 and John xix: 28–30. No further evidence is needed that the Lord Jesus Christ in His suffering and rejection is here described. Yet the Critical school attempts to deny the prophetic aspect. Referring to verse 21 and what the Gospels say about our Lord's words "I thirst," that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, Prof. Davidson saith in the Century Bible "the fulfilment of Scripture referred to must not be understood as the accomplishment of a direct prophecy." And again in commenting on verses 22–23, quoted by the Spirit of God in Romans xi, the same professor declares, "These imprecations are among the darkest and fiercest in the Psalter. The gulf which separates these verses from "Father forgive them," marks the impassable limits of typology." But it does not in the least. The words apply to the nation as righteous retribution from the side of God after they rejected His Son. In His heart there is still the same Love, for they are still beloved for the Father's sake. But these imprecations also belong rightly into the lips of the remnant against the Antichristian oppressors of the last days. Well may we read the Psalm and think of all His suffering and sorrow in our behalf. The Psalm ends with His Praise, the exaltation and Victory of the Christ who died for the ungodly.

PSALM LXX.

This Psalm is "to bring to remembrance." It is the repetition of the last five verses of the Fortieth Psalm. The Cross is again made known and the attitude of men towards that cross, those who reject Him and those that love His Salvation.

PSALM LXXI.

Israel's Song of Hope.

1. Declaration of Trust (verses 1–11).
2. Anticipations of Faith (verses 12–18).
3. Revival and Victory (verses 19–24).

This Psalm, which bears no inscription whatever, gives another prophetic picture of the faith and the anticipations of faith as found in the godly of Israel, when the salvation is about to come out of Zion. They look to Him who is all sufficient to deliver and to save them. The Psalm may well be called Israel's song of Hope. It abounds in many beautiful, refreshing statements, equally precious to us.

PSALM LXXII.

The Kingdom Psalm.

1. The King, Who Reigns in Righteousness (verses 1–4).
2. His Kingdom from Sea to Sea (verses 5–11).
3. The Blessings and the Kingdom (verses 12–20).

The last Psalm of this Exodus section describes the establishment of the promised kingdom, the kingdom of heaven on earth. Surely the Spirit of God directed the arrangement of the Psalms, and put each into the right place. Here we have a beautiful prophecy of what is yet to be and for which all is waiting now, in a time when every form of government has failed and law and order

seems to go to pieces. The King and the King's Son is the Lord Jesus Christ, He who came as the Only Begotten from the bosom of the Father to this earth, to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel, offering them first the promised Kingdom. His own received Him not. In previous Psalms we heard the voice of His complaints, His sorrows and saw the sufferings of the cross. But here we behold Him enthroned as the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace. Righteousness and Peace He alone can bring to man and He will surely bring both for the whole earth when the cloud brings Him back. Then He will be feared and worshipped as long as the sun and moon endure, for all times. Showers of blessing will fall and the righteous will flourish, while the wicked can trouble the righteous no more. Abundance of Peace will be the lot of mankind then and His kingdom will include all the kingdoms of the earth. His enemies will lick the dust and kings will bring Him presents. And the Blessings of His Kingdom! All the subjects in His kingdom will share them and all creation as well. The doxology of this section is the greatest of all. "And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen."— The prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended. Let us quote once more Prof. Davidson what he makes of this. "A note, probably added by the Editor of the Elohistic collection, to mark the end of a group of Davidic Psalms." What blindness! David had seen the glories of the kingdom of Him who is His Lord and His Son and then declared "his prayers are ended." He has nothing more to pray for.

THE THIRD BOOK.

PSALMS LXXIII–LXXXIX.

The third division of the Book of Psalms corresponds in character to the third Book of the Pentateuch, the Book of Leviticus. That is the Book of the Sanctuary, of Holiness. And this section, which is the shortest, also has the same character. Each Psalm brings the Sanctuary of Israel in view, with the same prophetic-dispensational character as in the first two Books. The Companion Bible gives the following division of the 17 Psalms: Psalms lxxiii–lxxxiii, The Sanctuary in Relation to Man. Psalms lxxxiv–lxxxix, The Sanctuary in Relation to Jehovah.

PSALMS LXXIII–LXXVII.

Psalms of Asaph concerning the Sanctuary.

PSALM LXXIII.

The Problem of the Suffering of the Righteous.

1. The Perplexity (verses 1–9).
2. Departure from God (verses 14–14).
3. The Sanctuary and the Solution (verses 15–28).

Eleven Psalms by Asaph open this Leviticus section. The clean heart is mentioned at once, and the assurance that truly God is good unto Israel and to those of clean heart. But here is the old question, the wicked prosper in spite of all their pride, their violence and corruption, while the righteous suffer. The prosperity of the wicked had an evil effect too upon the people, who departed from God. And Asaph's steps had well nigh slipped, as some said, "Verily I cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency." Then he turns to the sanctuary and finds the solution. In the light of God and His Holiness he sees their end. Desolation is coming upon them in a moment, they are utterly consumed with terrors.

Then having had the vision of the Sanctuary he grieves over his foolishness, like a beast which does not know God. But could there be more beautiful words than those in verses 23–26! Read and enjoy them. But the experience of Asaph will be the experience of the godly remnant.

PSALM LXXIV.

The Enemy in the Sanctuary.

1. The Prayer on account of the Enemy (verses 1–3).
2. The Work of the Enemy (verses 4–9).
3. Intercession for Intervention (verses 10–23).

This is a Psalm for instruction, a Maschil Psalm. The enemy is seen in the Sanctuary. This has been applied to the defilement of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, but prophetically it rather refers to that end-time, when the enemy will defile the temple with the abomination of desolation. (Matthew xxiv: 15.) Then the remnant loving the sanctuary tells the Lord about it as we read in this Psalm, and in a mighty intercession pleads for intervention. "O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove (Israel) unto the multitude of the wicked — Have respect unto the Covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." How true that will be during the great time of trouble. And then the cry to God to arise.

PSALM LXXV.

The Divine Answer.

1. Christ the Righteous Judge (verses 1–5).
2. His Judgment (verses 6–10).

It is Christ as King who is pictured in this Psalm coming to answer the pleas of His people in behalf of His Sanctuary. The translation in our version of the opening verses is faulty. "We give thanks to Thee, O God, we give thanks — Thy Name is near! When I have taken

the set time, I, even I, will judge uprightly. Though the earth and all the inhabitants thereof are melting, I myself set up its pillars." Then He executes His judgments. He deals with the wicked, the horn lifted up, the man of sin. He putteth down and lifteth up. The wicked will be cut off and the righteous exalted.

PSALM LXXVI.

Divine Government established and maintained.

1. The Prince of Peace Reigns (verses 1–6).
2. The Day of Wrath and what it brought (verses 7–12).

We behold the Lord now in Judah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, His Name great in Israel! In Salem He has His tabernacle and in Zion His dwelling place. There, as the Prince of Peace, He broke the arrows, the shield, and sword and battle. The stouthearted were spoiled. Judgments were heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still, then the meek of the earth were saved. The Lord is terrible to the kings of the earth, the final confederacy of nations. How wonderful the order of these Psalms!

PSALM LXXVII.

The Distressed Saint and His Comfort.

1. The Distress (verses 1–10).
2. The Comfort (verses 11–20).

This Psalm shows the distress of the Saint in deepest exercise of soul. He earnestly seeks the Lord and never leaves off; "my hand was stretched out in the night, and failed not" (literal translation of verse 2). He moaned and complained and his spirit was overwhelmed. Then in still greater distress he asks, "Will the Lord cast off forever? — Is His mercy come to an end forever?" — "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" The Comfort comes to him as he thinks of God's past dealings, as he

remembers His works of old. He realizeth "Thy way, O God, is in the Sanctuary, who is so great a God as our God?" He remembers how God redeemed His people Israel in the past, and this being His way as a Holy God, the God of the Sanctuary, He will redeem again and manifest His power. One can easily see how this Psalm also is Israelitish and finds its application in the last days.

PSALMS LXXVIII-LXXXIII

PSALM LXXVIII.

A Historical Retrospect.

1. The Call to Hear (verses 1–8).
2. Ephraim's Failure (verses 9–11).
3. His Dealings in Power and Mercy (verses 12–55).
4. The Continued Provocation (verses 56–64).
5. His Sovereign Grace in Chosing David (verses 65–72).

This historical Retrospect needs no further comment. It is God speaking to the hearts of His people through their own history from Egypt to David. How graciously He dealt with them all the way! The crowning fact is His sovereign Grace in choosing Judah, Mount Zion which he loved, building there His Sanctuary, and choosing David His servant to feed Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance. Here we may well think of the Son of David, God's Anointed in whom God's sovereign Grace is made known and who will yet feed Jacob and Israel His inheritance.

PSALM LXXIX.

Lamentation and Prayer on account of the enemy.

1. The Enemy in Jerusalem (verses 1–4).
2. How Long, Lord? (verses 5–13).

Zion, the place He loves, mentioned in the preceding Psalm, is here prophetically seen in desolation. The nations have come into the inheritance, Jerusalem is become

a heap of ruins, the temple is defiled. The dead bodies of His servants and His Saints lie unburied, and the people are a reproach, a scorn and a derision. A similar prophecy we found in the Seventy-fourth Psalm, which should be compared with this Psalm. While Jerusalem and the temple has seen more than once such desolations, we must view these predicted calamities as being the final disaster which is yet to overtake that City. Read Daniel ix: 27; Matthew xxiv: 15, and Rev. xi and Rev. xiii: 11–18. And in that day of calamity where shall the faithful turn? They cry to Him whose faithfulness is proven by the dealings of the past and assured by the Davidic Covenant. How long Lord? Pour out Thy wrath upon the nations and the kingdoms, the ten kingdoms and the little horn of Daniel vii. They pray, "Remember not our former iniquities — Help us, God of our Salvation." Then when the answer comes they will give Him never ceasing praise.

PSALM LXXX.

Looking to Heaven for Help through the Man at His Right Hand.

1. Calling to the Shepherd (verses 1–4).
2. The Ruin of His Inheritance (verses 5–16).
3. The Man of the Right Hand (verses 17–19).

This Psalm continues the same theme. They call now definitely to the Shepherd, He who is enthroned in glory between the Cherubim. They ask Him to "shine forth," to manifest Himself in glory and power for their salvation, to answer their cries for help. Three times they plead, "Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." Ancient Jewish comments on this verse say that the Face which shines upon Israel is the Messiah. Even so when His Face shines, when He is manifested in Glory His earthly people will be saved. And they know Him. They speak of Him as "the Man of Thy right hand," as "the Son of Man

whom Thou madest strong for Thyself." It is our Lord who sits at the right hand of God, waiting till His enemies are made the footstool of His feet. (Psalm xc.) Criticism refuses to accept this. They say, "Of course Israel is meant." (Century Bible on the Psalms, p. 88.)

PSALM LXXXI.

Hope Revived. His gracious Return to Israel.

1. The Blowing of the Trumpet (verses 1–5).
2. His Loving Call to His People (verses 6–12).
3. Gracious Results Promised (verses 13–16).

Hope has revived and singing is commanded. What interests us most is the call to blow the trumpet in the new moon. The Blowing of the Trumpet, in the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus xxiii), marks the beginning of Israel's New Year. Dispensationally it stands for the regathering of Israel and is followed by the Day of Atonement, that future day, when they shall look upon Him whom they pierced (Zech. xii: 10) and after that the final feast, the harvest feast of tabernacles, a type of the millennium. Thus with the blowing of trumpets begins the revival of Israel's Hope in answer to the prayers of the preceding Psalm. And He Himself addresses His people and promises as a result of hearkening to His voice deliverance from their enemies and other blessings.

PSALM LXXXII.

Concerning Judgment.

1. The Judge with His Righteous Judgment (verses 1–5).
2. Arise O God! Judge the Earth (verses 6–8).

His own presence in the congregation of God (Israel) means a righteous judgment. Israel is then owned as His congregation. (Numb. xxvii: 17.) The judges among them were called gods; the Hebrew word for judges in

Exodus xxi: 6 is "Elohim"— gods, mighty ones. Our Lord refers to this verse 6 in John x: 34. But they were unrighteous in their judgments and so He comes Himself to execute judgment and to do justice to the afflicted and needy. And more than that, He will judge the earth and the nations.

PSALM LXXXIII.

The final Enemies overthrown.

1. The Enemies in Confederacy (verses 1–8).
2. Their Complete Defeat and Fate (verses 9–18).

Elsewhere in Prophecy we read of the confederacies of nations, Israel's enemies, coming against the land of Israel in a final great onslaught. There will be an invasion from the North mentioned in Isaiah xxix; Joel ii; Daniel viii: 9–12, and in Zech. xii: 2. Then there will also be Gog and Magog invading the land (Ezek. xxxviii, etc.). It seems the former is in view here. The godly remnant prays and speaks of these invading hosts as "His enemies" calling upon the Lord to deal with them. Their satanic object is to cut them off from being a nation. They remind the Lord of what He did with Israel's former enemies and treat them likewise, so that Jehovah may become the Most High (God's millennial Name) over all the earth.

PSALMS LXXXIV–LXXXIX.

PSALM LXXXIV.

In view of the Sanctuary.

1. Heart Longings (verses 1–7).
2. In the Sanctuary (verses 8–12).

The two next Psalms are of the sons of Korah, who themselves are monuments of saving Grace. (They were saved from the fate of Korah; see Numb. xxvi: 10–11.) In these precious outpourings of the heart for the sanc-

tuary of the Lord, we read prophetically the heart longings of the remnant of Israel. They are not yet in possession of the fullest blessings but look forward now to an early realization of all their hopes of being at His altars again. And all they long for will be their happy and lasting portion. They will go from strength to strength; He will be their Sun and Shield; He will give Grace and Glory. Verse 9 shows us our Lord. "Behold, O God our shield, look upon the face of Thine Anointed (Christ)." It is through Him that all this will be accomplished.

PSALM LXXXV.

All Promised Blessings realized.

1. What Grace has done (verses 1–3).
2. Prayer for the Fulfilment (verses 4–9).
3. Righteousness and Peace (verses 10–13).

What will come to Israel when Christ returns to be their King is blessedly made known in the opening verses of this other Korah Psalm. Favour will rest upon the land; the captivity of Jacob is brought back; their iniquity is forgiven and their sin covered; His wrath is turned away. Hence they pray that all this may speedily be accomplished as it surely will in the days when heaven will send Him back. Then He will speak peace to His people and His Saints and glory will dwell in the land, even their land (verses 8–9). Then righteousness and peace will kiss each other and Truth shall spring out of the earth.

PSALM LXXXVI.

A Prayer.

1. The Prayer of the Poor and Needy One (verses 1–9).
2. The Praise of His Name (verses 10–17).

This Psalm has for an inscription "A prayer of David." We can hear in it the voice of the Son of David, our Lord,

pleading in the place of humiliation, and also the pleadings of the remnant Saints. The prophetic element enters in with verse 9. "All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before thee O Lord." This will be the glorious result of His humiliation. Into the many and precious details of this Psalm we cannot enter in. The name of the Lord (Adonai) is found seven times in this Psalm.

PSALM LXXXVII.

Zion and its Coming Glories.

Another Korah Psalm. Zion is the object of Jehovah's Love where He will manifest His Glory. Glorious things are spoken of the City of God. This we learn from many visions of the Prophets. When these prophecies are fulfilled and the glory has come, then Rahab (Pride — Egypt) and Babylon shall know, as well as Philistia, Tyre and Cush. Nations will be born again and turn to the Lord and share the Blessings of the Kingdom. Then the singers will sing "All my Springs are in Thee," in Him who dwelleth in Zion. The Christian believer gives now this testimony and knows its blessed truth, that Christ is all and in Him we have all our resources. But what will it be when nations with Zion shall know this!

PSALM LXXXVIII.

The Deepest Soul Misery poured out.

1 In Deepest Misery and Distress (verses 1–7).
2. Crying and No Answer (verses 8–18).

This is a Maschil Psalm by Heman the Ezrahite. See 1 Kings iv: 31; 1 Chronicles vi: 33, 44; xxv: 4. It is a Psalm of deepest distress, picturing the darkest experience with no ray of light or word of comfort. That it describes the real experience of a Saint no one would doubt. But in it we can hear again the voice of sorrow of Him

who was the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is His testimony concerning that He passed through as the great Sufferer. "Thou hast laid me into the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves."—"Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, Thy terrors cut me off." Such was His experience when on the Cross. The Christ in Humiliation and Suffering is mentioned so frequently to remind His people of the costprice of Deliverance and Glory, and that His must be the Glory and the praise.

PSALM LXXXIX.

God's Faithfulness. His Oath bound Covenant with David.

1. Jehovah's Faithfulness (verses 1–18).
2. His Covenant with David (verses 19–37).
3. The Ruin and Desolation (verses 38–45).
4. How Long, Lord? Remember! (verses 46–52).

A Maschil of Ethan, a Merarite (1 Chron. vi:4; xv:17). The greater part of this Psalm extols Jehovah's lovingkindness and faithfulness and makes prominent the covenant with David. We must of course look beyond David and behold Him, the Son of David in whom this covenant will be ratified. Viewed prophetically this Psalm becomes intensely interesting. Verses 4–37 tell us of all the blessings which will be on earth when our Lord, the Son of David, is King. He is the Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. (Verse 27.) All His enemies will be beaten down, they are scattered. (Verses 10, 22.) Justice and Judgment will be the foundations of His throne, mercy and truth will go before His face. (Verse 14.) His people will be blessed and walk in the light of His countenance; He will be the glory of their strength, their defense and their King (15–18). His seed (including the heavenly people, the church, and the earthly people) shall endure forever, and His throne as the days of

heaven (29, 36). The past ruin of the house of David and the people Israel, the result of unbelief and disobedience, covered with shame instead of glory, is described in verses 38–45 and the prayer follows that the Lord may remember what He has sworn to David.

THE FOURTH BOOK.

PSALMS XC–CVI.

The Ninetieth Psalm begins the fourth Book of Psalms, corresponding in different ways with the Book of Numbers. It opens with the only Psalm written by Moses in the wilderness when the people were dying on account of unbelief, and is followed by a Psalm which shows the second Man, the Lord as the Head of a new Creation. In this Book are found numerous millennial Psalms, showing us prophetically when under Christ, in the day when all things are put under His feet, the wilderness experiences of His people end, glory comes to Israel, the nations and all the earth.

PSALMS XC–XCIII.

PSALM XC.

Man's Condition of Sin and Death.

1. The Eternal One (verses 1–2).
2. Frailty and Death because of Sin (verses 3–10).
3. The Prayer: Return Jehovah! How long (verses 11–17).

This Psalm of Moses shows what man is as a sinner, picturing his nothingness, the misery and frailty of his life, and death. The race dies, but does not become extinct, for He says, "Return ye children of men." They are carried away as with a flood, they are as a sleep-like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth." And time to the Eternal One is as nothing, for a thousand years are to Him as nothing. (See 2 Peter iii: 8.) It is true, every statement as to frailty, uncertainty and death, of the entire race. But even in this Psalm of the first man with sin and death, we must see the prophetic aspect. If Verses 7–8 is true of those who died in the wilderness, it is also true of God's earthly

people in the time of their trouble. "For we are consumed by thine anger and by Thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." Hence their plea to return. The prayer with which this Psalm of Death closes becomes illuminated when we look at it dispensationally. "Return, O Lord, how long? And let it repent Thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.—Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants and Thy Glory unto their children." It is the expression of hope uttered by His earthly Saints.

PSALM XCI.

Christ, the Second Man.

1. In Dependence (verses 1–2).
2. In Security (verses 3–8).
3. His Triumph and Exaltation (verses 9–16).

This Psalm has no inscription. Its author is unknown, but we know it is the testimony of the Spirit of God concerning the second Man, our Lord. Satan knew this also for he quoted this Psalm to our Lord in Matthew iv, omitting the words "in all thy ways." (Verses 11–12–Matthew iv: 6.) It is the Psalm God's people love to read on account of its precious assurances given to those who put their trust in Him. In a larger and prophetic sense we have here the blessings of God's power in the Kingdom age when under the rule of the King His people will be kept from all evil. But let us not forget that we have in it a prophetic picture of our Lord as He walked as the dependent Man on the earth. He dwelled in the secret place of the Most High and trusted in Him, walking in perfect obedience. Death had no claim on His life, for He knew no sin. No evil could come near Him. Angels ministered unto Him. The Lion and the Adder — Satan in his two-fold character, as the powerful enemy and as

the sneaking, hidden serpent — He tramples under His feet. And some day the enemy will also be completely bruised under the feet of His people. Then His exaltation, "I will set Him on high."

PSALM XCII.

A Psalm of Praise.

1. Praise for His Works (verses 1–5).
2. The Enemies who perish (verses 6–9).
3. The happy lot of the Righteous (verses 10–15).

The inscription tells us it is a Psalm for the Sabbath day. The rest for His people comes when the Lord arises, delivers them, and the enemies perish. This Psalm looks forward to that rest, the coming great Lord's day. The praise is on account of the work Jehovah has done, His redemption work in behalf of His people. "Thou hast made me glad through Thy work — I will triumph in the work of Thy hands." Then the wicked shall perish, and all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered, while the Saints of God shall flourish like the Palm tree.

PSALM XCIII.

Jehovah Reigneth.

This is a Kingdom Psalm by an unknown author. The Lord reigneth in majesty. And under His reign the world is established; He is above all the floods of many waters, none can withstand Him. Revelation xi: 15–18 may be read in connection with this brief kingdom Psalm. The angry nations mentioned in this passage correspond with the floods of waters mentioned in the Psalm.

PSALMS XCIV–C.

PSALM XCIV.

Prayer for the Execution of the Vengeance of God.

1. The Prayer on account of the Enemy (verses 1–7).
2. Expostulation with the Wicked (verses 8–13).
3. The Comfort of the Righteous (verses 14–23).

The seven Psalms grouped together lead now on to the full establishment of the kingdom on earth and most of these Psalms celebrate His judgment reign, and the blessings of the age to come. We start once more with a Psalm which pictures vividly the trials of the days which precede the coming of the Lord and the coming of His kingdom. The Spirit of God has arranged these Psalms, as we have by this time learned, in such a manner as to lead from suffering to glory, the path which He went and which His people are appointed to follow also. Hence we see in this Psalm the wicked persecuting and breaking in pieces the people of God, and the righteous remnant is calling to the God to whom vengeance belongeth to show Himself, that is, to manifest His glory in their behalf. The voice of faith we hear also, the assurance that the Lord will not forsake His people nor His inheritance, that the Lord will intervene in behalf of His own and cut off the wicked.

PSALM XCV.

In Anticipation of His Coming.

1. Singing unto Him? (verses 1–5).
2. Let us Worship and bow down (verses 6–11).

It is a call to Israel in anticipation of the soon appearing of the expected Saviour-King. The next Psalm will show that He has come. How are they, His people, to welcome Him? With singing, with confession (this is the literal translation of thanksgiving in verse 2), with worship and prostration. And there is the warning now not to

harden their hearts, not be like their fathers who could not enter into His rest. His people must welcome Him as a willing, as an obedient people and such will be the humble remnant, having passed through the gracious discipline of the tribulation days. The end verses are quoted in Hebrews iii and iv.

PSALM XCVI.

The Lord has Come.

1. The New Song (verses 1–3).
2. The Lord Supreme (verses 4–6).
3. Glory unto His Name (verses 7–10).
4. Creation Celebrating (verses 11–13).

And now He has come and is manifested in the earth. The singing times begin and will last for a thousand years, when they will merge into the never ceasing songs of eternity. It is a call now to make the glad and glorious news known in all the earth and to make His glory known among the nations. That will be the work of converted Israel. Not much comment is needed; it is all so plain if we just see it refers to His visible Return. And while Israel rejoices, the nations hear that He reigneth, all creation will rejoice as well, for He takes the curse away and delivers creation from its groans.

PSALM XCVII.

His Glorious Reign.

1. Jehovah Reigneth (verses 1–5).
2. In Righteousness and with Glory (verses 6–12).

He reigneth! Earth and the multitude of isles will now rejoice, for He whose right it is occupies the throne and all unrighteousness, wickedness and idolatry will be banished. Zion and the daughters of Judah rejoice and all the righteous rejoice. It is the time of singing and of

joy. And the heavens will reveal His righteousness, while angels worship Him. (Verse 7 and Hebrews i: 6.) What glory scenes will then take place upon this earth!

PSALM XCVIII.

The New Song.

1. The Call to Sing (verses 1–3).
2. The Response (verses 4–6).
3. The Praise of All (verses 7–9).

The Lord by His Coming has done wonderful things. He has brought salvation and Victory; He has made known His salvation, His righteousness in judgment was seen by the nations. He has also remembered the house of Israel in His mercy and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God. And therefore the call to sing the new song. And all the world and creation will join in.

PSALM XCIX.

The Reign of Righteousness.

1. His Throne (verses 1–3).
2. Judgment and Righteousness Executed (verses 4–6).
3. His Gracious Dealings (verses 7–9.

It is a Psalm of the righteous government. The Lord who reigns is holy, demands obedience. He is holy and must be worshipped. Moses and Aaron were His priests in the past and Samuel among them that called upon His Name. He dealt graciously with His people in the past and forgave them, and the same Lord now reigneth and will deal in righteousness and mercy with His people.

PSALM C.

Nothing but Praise.

It is Israel's voice in praise which we hear in this brief Psalm, which so fittingly concludes this series of great

millennial Psalms. They exhort that all the earth should make a joyful noise unto the Lord, to serve Him and come before Him with singing. The third verse tells us that they are the speakers. All are to enter His gates with thanksgiving and come into His courts with praise. How often is this Psalm used in a spiritualised way, making the gates and the courts some church building. But we worship in Spirit and in Truth and not in an earthly house. The gates and courts have reference to that future Temple, which will be a house of prayer for all nations.

PSALMS CI–CVI.

PSALM CI.

The Righteous King Speaketh.

1. The Character of the King (verses 1–3).
2. His Righteous Demands of His Subjects (verses 4–8).

A Psalm of David. He speaks as King concerning himself and those in his kingdom. But it is evident that once more he speaks as a prophet concerning the true King, the Son, whom God had promised through him, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is a King of perfect righteousness, which David was not. This true King is in complete fellowship with Jehovah, for He is one with Him. He will not tolerate evil in His Kingdom of righteousness. The proud and the wicked are not suffered by Him. He will destroy early (morning by morning) the wicked out of the land and all evil doers will be cut off from the city of the Lord. Those who walk in a perfect way shall serve Him.

PSALM CII.

Christ the King in His Humiliation.

1. In the place of Humiliation and Dependence (verses 1–7).
2. His Enemies (verses 8–11).
3. The set Time for Zion (verses 12–16).
4. The Blessings which follow (verses 17–22).
5. The God-man in His Work (verses 23–28).

That this Psalm is a prophecy concerning the sufferings of Christ, His humiliation and death, and the gracious results which flow from it, is confirmed by the quotation in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In that chapter His work and His Glory are unfolded. Here we have both. First we have a prophetic picture of the lonely One, like a pelican, an owl in the desert and as a sparrow alone upon the house top. What a deep humiliation for Him who created all things (verses 23–28) to take the lowest place, even like a sparrow. Then we read how His enemies reproach Him. He eats His bread like ashes and mingles His drink with weeping. He suffers more than that, in making atonement — God's indignation and wrath is upon Him.

Next we read something of the joy which was set before Him on account of which He endured the cross, despising the shame. Here is part of the travail of His soul. God will, through Him, have mercy upon Zion when the set time to favour her has come. All nations will then fear His Name, and all the Kings behold His glory. And Zion shall assuredly be built when the Lord appears in glory, His second Coming. Then the glorious results when " the people are gathered together (in the kingdom) and the kingdoms serve the Lord." The closing verses tell us of His Glory as the God-Man. The Man who suffered thus is the Lord of all, Jehovah the Creator. The Spirit of God alone could teach the true application of these words and He has done so in Hebrews i: 10–12.

PSALM CIII.

The Praise of Israel.

1. The Benefits of full Salvation (verses 1–7).
2. Merciful and Gracious (verses 8–18).
3. His Throne and His Kingdom (verses 19–22).

This is the well-beloved Psalm, because God's people love it for its precious and beautiful expressions, telling

out the full salvation of our Saviour Lord and the gracious compassion which He manifests towards His own. But we must not overlook the prophetic aspect, which but few believers have recognized. It is really the hymn of Praise which will be sung by redeemed and restored Israel. Theirs will be a whole-souled Praise. Their iniquities are forgiven, their diseases are healed, their life is redeemed from the pit, they are crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies. Their youth is renewed like the eagle's (Isaiah xl: 28–31, which will be fulfilled then). And then the riches of mercy towards His beloved people! His Throne and His kingdom are seen in the closing verses and everything blesses Him.

PSALM CIV.

Creation's Praise.

1. The Creator (verses 1–4).
2. The Foundations of the Earth (verses 5–9).
3. His Works Manifesting His Kindness (verses 10–23).
4. How Manifold are Thy Works (verses 24–30).
5. Rejoicing in His Works. Hallelujah (verses 31–35).

He is now praised as the Creator by creation. He is seen in His Creator-Glory. When the kingdom is established that Glory will then be manifested. Verse 4 is quoted in Hebrews I showing that the Glory of the risen Christ is here likewise revealed. The angels of God will ascend and descend upon the Son of Man. Then creation will be in its rightful place and man will see His Glory there. The earth will be filled with His Riches (verse 24). Then too sinners will be consumed out of the earth and the wicked be no more for He is King. The Psalm ends with Hallelujah. His people and all creation will praise Him.

PSALMS CV AND CVI.

The Memories of the Past.

The last two Psalms of this fourth section review the entire History of Israel up to the time of the Judges. It is the story of God's faithfulness and mercy, and the story of their shameful failure and Apostasy. He is ever mindful of His Covenant, and that covenant is mentioned first, as the foundation of all. Then how He watched over them. The story of Joseph is mentioned, followed by the rehearsal of the deliverance out of Egypt. The cvi Psalm is couched in words of confession, showing their failure all the way, sinning, forgetting, lusting, unbelieving and disobedient. Only infinite Mercy and Grace could save such a people. Prophetically these Psalms express the repentance and national confession of Israel, when the Lord has saved them. Then with a new heart, the nation born again, with a new spirit within them, they read their history aright and learn to know the God of Jacob as never before. It is the fulfillment of Ezekiel xxxvi: 31. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourself in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations."

THE FIFTH BOOK.

PSALMS CVII–CL.

The final section of the Book of Psalms, the fifth, is just like Deuteronomy. It shows God's ways with Israel, the end of these ways in deliverance not only for His people, but for their land, for the nations of the earth, for all creation. The Book ends with the Hallelujah chorus of redemption.

PSALMS CVII AND CVIII.

PSALM CVII.

Israel's Deliverances.

1. The Wanderers Regathered (verses 1–9).
2. The Prisoners Released (verses 10–16).
3. The Fools Healed (verses 17–22).
4. Brought to the Haven of Rest (verses 23–32).
5. The Praise of His Ways (verses 33–43).

In the Book of Deuteronomy, in Moses' great prophecies, we read of the scattering of the nation, the lot which should befall them as a disobedient people, becoming wanderers among the nations. But we read also of the promised regathering and the promises of restoration (Deut. xxx). How harmonious it is to find the first Psalm of the Deuteronomy section celebrating this promised regathering and restoration! Again we see the divine power which guided the hand of the instrument who arranged these Psalms. And they thank and praise Him for this accomplished salvation. As wanderers amongst the nations they suffered and yet perished not as the peculiar nation; but now they are brought back to the city of habitation, to their own land. They had rebelled against the words of God and sat as prisoners in darkness and shadow of death; but now they are released and He brought them out of the darkness, out of judicial blindness, out of national and spiritual death, into life and light. They were

fools on account of their transgressions; but now His Word has healed them. They were the storm tossed nation upon the restless waves of the sea, the emblems of the nations of the world; but now the storm is passed, the sea of nations is calm and He has brought them into the desired haven. For all this they praise Him. They are now "Israel His Glory" through whom and in whom He has glorified Himself.

PSALM CVIII.

Israel's Praise for Salvation.

1. Israel's Praise (verses 1–4).
2. The Inheritance (verses 5–9).
3. Through God alone (verses 10–13).

This Psalm is not a patchwork of two other Psalms as the Critics declare (Ps. lxxii: 8–12 and lx: 7–14), but it comes in as a Psalm of David to give another hint on Israel's praise in the day of deliverance. Their heart is fixed to sing His praise. It is a praise not only amongst themselves, but a praise among the nations. Where they were once a byeword they are now a blessing. And their deliverance and possession they will enjoy is not of themselves; it is through God and His power. The second part of the Psalm looks back to the time when deliverance had not yet come.

PSALMS CIX–CXIII.

PSALM CIX.

Christ in Humiliation.

1. Despised and Rejected (verses 1–5).
2. The Rejectors and their Fate (verses 6–20).
3. The Christ in His Sorrow (verses 21–25).

The five Psalms which are next grouped together belong to the most interesting in the whole collection. They give a marvellous prophecy concerning Christ, His rejection,

Exaltation and coming Glory. In Psalm cix we see Him rejected. In Psalm cx He is at the Right hand of God, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool, returns as the victorious King and becomes the Priest after the order of Melchisedec. The three Psalms which follow, all Hallelujah Psalms, show forth His Glory and His Kingdom.

The cix Psalm gives us once more the story of His rejection. We hear the complaints from Himself, indited by His Spirit. He is the hated One. They fight against Him without a cause. They reward Him with evil for good, and His love, the love which sought them, they answer with hatred. In verses 6–15 has reference to Judas who betrayed Him and applies to all those who reject Him. Verse 8 is quoted by Peter in Acts i:20. Of the betrayer it is said "He loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him." But this is true of all who reject Christ. All the cursing and punishment which come upon the rejectors of Christ are self chosen. In the closing verses we hear the weeping, sorrowful voice of the rejected One.

PSALM CX.

The Psalm of the King-Priest.

1 His Person, Exaltation and Waiting (verse 1).
2. His Manifestation and His Glory (verses 2–4).
3. His Judgment and His Glory (verses 5–7).

Seven verses only, but what revelations and depths we find here! The Psalm is frequently quoted in the New Testament. Who is the Person of whom the first verse testifies? Here is the Critics' answer. "Is the Psalm Messianic? Looking at it by itself, and without prepossession, one would not say that it is, for the writer has in mind some actual ruler of his own day, and his references are to events of his own times" (Prof. Davidson). But what about the words of our Lord in Matthew xxii: 41–46? In the light of these words every critic who de-

nies the Messianic meaning of this Psalm is branded as a liar. And such they are. Our Lord shows that David wrote the Psalm, that he wrote by the Spirit, that the Psalm speaks of Him, as David's Lord and David's son. To deny these facts is infidelity. And the Holy Spirit useth the Psalm to show the exaltation of Christ. See Acts ii: 34–35; Hebrews i: 13 and Hebrews x: 12–13.

How well it fits in with the preceding Psalm. The rejected One is the risen One. His work on earth as the exalted Him to His own right hand. There He waits for sin-bearer is finished. God raised Him from the dead and the hour when God will make His enemies His footstool. This is not accomplished by the preaching of the Gospel, nor by the work of the church, but by God when He sends Him back to earth again and He will bind Satan and all His enemies will be overthrown. The rod of His power will proceed out of Zion and He will rule in the midst of His enemies. Then in that coming day of power, His people (Israel) will be a willing people, who will shine in the beauty of holiness in the dawning of the morning. He will be the true Melchisedec, a Priest upon His own Throne. Then His judgment work and His Victory, judging nations and the wicked head of nations. "He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall He lift up the head." He was the humbled One, who drank of death, and now is the exalted One.*

PSALM CXI.

Hallelujah! He Has Done It.

This is the first Hallelujah Psalm following the cx Psalm, in which He is praised for what He is and for what He has done. It is a perfect alphabetical Psalm, not a letter of the Hebrew Alphabet is missing. It shows the perfect One and the perfect Praise He will receive

* For a complete exposition see the author's pamphlet "The Royal Psalms" (price 10 cents).

when He is on the Throne as the King-Priest. The next Psalm is also perfect in its Alphabetical character. Both Psalms have 22 lines, each prefixed by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in their right order. All then will be order and all human speech can say will be said in praise of Him who has done it. Read the Psalm and see how His work in redemption is praised. He has now sent redemption to His people. Verse 9 is quoted in Zacharias' song, Luke i: 68, showing that in faith he too looked forward to the time of the Kingdom.

PSALM CXII.

Hallelujah! The Righteous are Blessed.

The second Hallelujah Psalm tells of blessedness of the righteous in the day the Lord is enthroned. It is pre-eminently Israel. His seed will be mighty upon the earth — wealth and riches will be in their house. And the righteous character, their righteous acts are given. "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor." While this is done by the Jews even today in their unbelief, what will it be in the day they know Him and worship the King? See Paul's answer in Romans xi: 12–15. The desire of the wicked is then perished. Righteousness reigns.

PSALM CXIII.

Hallelujah! Praise His Name!

This third Hallelujah Psalm begins with a Hallelujah and ends with Hallelujah. It is given in the authorized version as "Praise ye the Lord" (as in all these Psalms). It would be more sublime to maintain this grand old Hebrew word "Hallelujah." His Name is praised. "Praise the name of the Lord — Blessed be the Name of the Lord." Yea from the rising of the Sun unto the going down, from one end of the earth unto the other, the Lord's Name is

praised. He is above all nations. What Hannah so beautifully uttered in her Song of Praise has come. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the Princes of His people." That is Israel redeemed by Him. And so is "the barren woman, a joyful mother of children."

PSALMS CXIV–CXVII.

PSALM CXIV.

Retrospect.

As in the book of Deuteronomy God's ways with His people are reviewed so we find in some of these Psalms the reminders of God's dealing with Israel in the past. Here it is first of all the deliverance out of Egypt and what happened then, the type of the greater deliverance effected by the power of God. (See Jeremiah xvi: 14–15.)

PSALM CXV.

Who Their God Is?

1. Israel's God (verses 1–3).
2. In Contrast with Idols (verses 4–8).
3. O Israel Trust in the Lord (verses 9–18).

Here Israel acknowledges her Saviour-Lord, unto Him alone is Glory due. The nations had asked, Where is now their God? (Ps. xlii: 3, 10; lxxix: 10). The Contrast between the God of Israel and the dumb idols of the nations follows. But Israel's God, the Lord, who has delivered them, is the living God and therefore the exhortation to trust Him who blesseth His people. Israel's resolve closes this Psalm: "But we will praise the Lord, from this time forth forevermore. Hallelujah."

PSALM CXVI.

The Praise of Israel for Deliverance from Death.

1. The Deliverance — Experience (verses 1–9).
2. Thanksgiving (verses 10–19).

Redeemed Israel expresseth in this Psalm her love to Jehovah for His gracious deliverances, for answered prayer and for His salvation. They were, during the great tribulation, as a faithful remnant; surrounded by the sorrows of death, the pains of Sheol were upon them. Death stared them in the face. Then they cried to the Lord, and, as of old, He heard them and sent deliverance. He dealt bountifully with them, delivered them from death, the eyes from tears, the feet from falling. And now they serve Him, taking the cup of salvation and performing their vows unto the Lord. The death of those who died in the tribulation period as martyrs is mentioned in verse 15. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints." Compare with Revel. xiv: 13, which also refers to the Jewish martyrs during the tribulation. The Psalm ends with another Hallelujah.

PSALM CXVII.

This is the shortest Psalm. All the earth, all the nations, are now called upon to praise, because His merciful kindness has been great towards His people Israel. And their blessing means the blessing of the world. See the significant and interesting verse in Deut. xxxii: 43, the last note of Moses' prophetic song. Hallelujah.

PSALMS CXVIII AND CXIX.

PSALM CXVIII.

Christ the Head of the Corner.

1. His Mercy Endureth Forever (verses 1–7).
2. The Past Experience (verses 8–12).
3. Jehovah My Salvation (verses 13–19).
4. The Rejected Stone the Head of the Corner (verses 20–29).

This Psalm is the last one which is used from ancient times by the Jews in celebrating the Passover in the home. The Psalms sung begin with Psalm cxiii and end with this Psalm, the cxviii. It is called the "Hallel" the Praise. Our Lord sang together with His disciples this Hallel (Matthew xxvi: 30; Mark xiv: 26). The cxviii Psalm was therefore the last which they sang, before the Lord with His disciples that memorable night when He was betrayed, went to the Mount of Olives. And speaking to the chief priests and elders our Lord applied this Psalm to Himself. See Verse 22 and compare with Matthew xxi:41. Furthermore Verse 26 is also used by our Lord in Matthew xxiii: 39. So there is no question that the Spirit of God speaks of Him in this Psalm. It has been suggested that this Psalm was written and used in connection with the completion and consecration of the second Temple. That it was used in other feast days, apart from Passover, seems evident; perhaps in connection with the feast of tabernacles. The Psalm begins with Thanksgiving for His mercy manifested towards Israel in their deliverance. Nations had compassed them about, but in the Name of the Lord they were cut off. Therefore Israel sings "The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation." The voice of rejoicing and salvation is therefore in the tabernacles of the righteous. (Verses 14, 15.) They are delivered from death. Note the "gates of righteousness" in verse 19, through which they wish to enter in to praise the Lord. But immediately after we read "This gate is the Lord's, the righteous shall enter

it." It is Christ the Door, through which Israel also must enter, as every other sinner must use Him as the gate, the door of salvation. We read therefore at once "I will praise Thee for Thou hast heard me and art become my Salvation."

And then the verse concerning the stone which the builders rejected and which has become the head of the corner. His people rejected Him and He became for them the stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. They were nationally broken to pieces (Matthew xxi: 43). Then He became the cornerstone of another house, the church, of which He is the chief cornerstone. In the day of His second Coming He will be the smiting stone, striking down Gentile dominion (Daniel ii) and grinding opposing nations to powder (Matthew xxi: 43). And after that He will be the cornerstone for His people Israel, upon whom all rests. This is indeed marvellous in their eyes as it is also to us. The cry "Hosanna" Save now (Verse 25) and "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord" is the welcome of Israel to her returning King.

PSALM CXIX.

The Law Written on Their Hearts. The Praise of the Word.

This is the longest and most perfect Psalm in the whole collection. It is an alphabetical acrostic. It is composed of 22 sections, each having eight verses, 176 verses in all. Each section begins with a different letter of the alphabet and each verse of the different sections begins also with the corresponding letter of the section. Eight times each letter of the alphabet is mentioned in the 22 sections. The number eight in the Word has the meaning of resurrection, death is gone and life has come. Israel has passed from death to life and now extols the Word and the Law of God. The time has come when it is fulfilled what the Lord spoke through Jeremiah concerning

the New Covenant, "I will put my Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts." We behold then in this Psalm the joy of Israel in knowing the Word, in Praising the Word and being obedient to the Word. In each verse except verses 90 and 122 the Word is mentioned and the following terms are employed: Law, Commandment, Word, Saying, Path, Way, Testimonies, Judgments, Precepts and Statutes.

We give the 22 Sections under the different Hebrew letters with a brief succession as to their contents:

Aleph: 1–8. The Blessedness of Those who obey His Word. *Beth:* 9–16. Cleansing by the Word. *Gimmel:* 17–24. The Quickening by the Word. *Daleth:* 25–32. The Uplift of the Word. *He:* 33–40. The Power of the Word. *Vau:* 41–48. Victory through the Word. *Zayin:* 49–56. Comfort through the Word. *Cheth:* 57–64. Preservation through the Word. *Teth:* 65–72. The Pricelessness of the Word. *Jod:* 73–80. Testimony through the Word. *Caph:* 81–88. Affliction and the Word. *Lamed:* 89–96. The Word eternal. *Mem:* 97–104. Wisdom through the Word. *Nun:* 105–112. The Word the Lamp and the Light for all occasions. *Samech:* 113–120. The Wicked and the Word. *Ain:* 121–128. Separation and Deliverance through the Word. *Pe:* 129–136. Communion through the Word. *Tsaddi:* 137–144. Zeal for the Word. *Koph:* 145–152. Experience through the Word. *Resh:* 153–160. Salvation through the Word. *Schin:* 161–168. The Perfection of the Word. *Tau:* 169–176. Prayer and Praise through the Word.

The whole Psalm is a marvellous evidence of verbal inspiration. But what will it be when the Word will thus be exalted and lifted to its proper place of supremacy through righteous Israel!

PSALMS CXX–CXXXIV.

The Psalms of Degrees.

Fifteen brief Psalms follow, called Songs of Degrees, or, Ascents. They were in all probability used by Israel going up to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate the feasts of the Lord —"Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, a testimony for Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." They are indeed Psalms of "the goings-up" for we rise higher and higher as we read through them. Prophetically they give us again the steps from trial and suffering to the glorious consummation.

As they are so simple in language and construction no lengthy annotations are needed. Psalm cxx begins with distress, picturing again the suffering of the righteous godly remnant. In Psalm cxxi the Keeper of Israel, the Covenant Keeping God, is revealed, who has made heaven and earth and neither sleeps nor slumbers. He has kept Israel in all her troubles and saved them. Psalm cxxii brings us to Jerusalem and the house of the Lord. The redeemed ones go up to worship there. Thrones are there also for judgment, the thrones of which our Lord speaks in Matthew xix: 28. Peace and Prosperity have come.

In Psalm cxxiii there is another cry to Jehovah to be gracious and the next one, Psalm cxxiv celebrates the deliverance of Israel. "Blessed be the Lord." Men arose against them, but the Lord delivered His people. Mount Zion comes in view in Psalm cxxv. It cannot be moved, it abideth forever. Then when the Word and the Law go forth from Zion and Jerusalem there will be peace upon Israel. Psalm cxxvi celebrates the returning of the Captives and this is the song they sing: "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Psalm cxxvii acknowledges the Lord as the One from whom all blessing and help must come. The Psalm which follows the cxxxviii shows the blessing which will be enjoyed when the Lord reigneth and blesseth His people out of Zion.

Then we have a description of Israel's affliction in the past and how the hand of the Lord delivered them out of all their afflictions — Psalm cxxix. And in Psalm cxxx we have a Psalm calling for forgiveness and waiting for the plenteous mercy and redemption which is promised to His people. Psalm cxxxi shows Israel prostrate, hoping in the Lord. Then follows the beautiful cxxxii Psalm in which Zion and its King is prophetically unfolded. It begins with the promise made by David to build a house, but the Lord made a covenant instead with him. "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon Thy throne" (Acts ii:30). And that is Christ, as the Son of David. He will choose Zion; it is His resting-place. His enthroned in Zion and what is connected with it is found in verses 13–18.

The cxxxiii Psalm gives a blessed picture, not of the church, as it is so often taught, but of the great brotherhood of Israel, when once more they are a nation before the Lord. Then the Spirit will flow upon them and through them. In the last songs of the ascents, Psalm cxxxiv, we behold them in the house of the Lord, in the temple, lifting up their hands in worship in the sanctuary, praising the Lord and calling for blessing out of Zion.

PSALMS CXXXV AND CXXXVI.

PSALM CXXXV.

Israel's Knowledge and Praise of the Lord.

1. Knowing and Praising His Name (verses 1–7).
2. Deliverances of the Past Remembered (verses 8–12).
3. His Name Endureth Forever (verses 13–21).

The last Song of ascents (cxxxiv) showed Israel's Praise in the Sanctuary. The two Psalms which come next show this worship and praise more fully. This Psalm begins with a Hallelujah and ends with a Hallelujah. It will be an endless Praise. The servants who

stand in the house of the Lord and in the Courts are called to praise Him. Israel cleansed and redeemed is now His servant (Zech. iii:7). They are His peculiar treasure (Verse 4 — Exod. xix:5). Then once more the remembrance of the deliverances of the past, the contrast with the idols of the nations (like Psalm cxv) and the call to the house of Aaron, the house of Israel, the house of Levi and all that fear Him, to bless the Lord.

PSALM CXXXVI.

His Mercy Endureth Forever.

This is a historical Psalm of Praise, as His grateful people Israel, think of all He has done. Twenty-six times we read "His mercy endureth forever." The Psalm begins with a threefold call to give thanks unto the Lord, the God of gods, and the Lord of lords; the triune God is thus adored. And after this the brief sentences which rehearse His mighty deeds of the past as Creator and as the God of Israel, each followed by the praise of His mercy. This Psalm was undoubtedly used in the Temple worship. The Jews in their ritual call it "the great Hallel." It will probably be used in the future, when in the new Temple Israel will sing the Praises of His Name.

PSALMS CXXXVII–CXXXIX.

PSALM CXXXVII.

Remembering the Exile.

This Psalm is in remembrance of the Babylonian captivity written by an unknown person. Some have named Jeremiah, but he was not in Babylon. The Psalm expresseth the never dying love for Zion in the heart of Israel. The same love is alive today after an exile of almost two thousand years. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning. Let my

tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy." But this Psalm also looks forward to the day when Divine retribution will be measured out to the daughter of Babylon, when Israel's enemies will be punished for their sins committed against His people. The fate of the final Babylon as given in Isaiah xiii: 16 corresponds with the last verse of this Psalm. See also Isaiah xlvii: 6.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

A Psalm of Deliverance.

This is a Psalm of David giving praise to the Lord for deliverance. The harp is now no more hanging idle on the willows, but is tuned afresh to praise His Name. It is not alone David's praise who cried and the Lord answered him, it is the praise of Israel for accomplished deliverance from the exile and therefore the kings of the earth are also mentioned. "All the kings of the earth shall praise thee O Lord, when they hear the words of Thy mouth."

PSALM CXXXIX.

In the Divine Presence.

1. His Omniscience (verses 1–6).
2. His Omnipresence (verses 7–12).
3. Praising Him (verses 13–18).
4. Delighting in His Holiness (verses 19–24).

Here we see the people of God in the light of God, standing in His Presence. He is an omniscient and an omnipresent God. How marvellously this is given in this Psalm! And what a comfort to know that He knoweth, that He seeth, that He is about us, around us, with us everywhere, that His hand leads, that His right hand upholds the Saint, and that darkness and light are both alike to Him. And this God has fashioned us, He is our Creator. And the thoughts of God mentioned in verses 17

and 18 may be applied to the thoughts of His love in redemption. How precious are these thoughts in which He has remembered the sinner's need. They are indeed more than the sand. And with the knowledge of God's omniscience, His omnipresence, His thoughts of Love and Grace, the Saint loves God's holiness, separating himself from the wicked, counting God's enemies his enemies, hating those who rise up against God. And then that prayer —"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Reader! Can you pray thus daily in the presence of an omniscient and omnipresent Lord?

PSALMS CXL–CXLII.

These three Psalms are Psalms of David. The third one in this series, the cxlii, is another Maschil, the last Maschil Psalm, being a prayer when David was in the Cave. In these Psalms the distress of Israel the godly remnant of Israel is again remembered. In Psalm cxl we see prophetically the evil and violent man, that man of sin of the last days. And therefore have we one more imprecatory prayer for the destruction of the wicked (Verse 10). The last verses look forward to the overthrow of the wicked and the exaltation of the righteous.

In Psalm clxi the righteous are seen in separation from the wicked, and the prayer for preservation. Psalm cxlii contains continued prayer for deliverance. The Psalmist's voice is lifted up to the Lord. Before Him he poured out his complaint and before Him he showed his trouble; not before man, but before the Lord. He knew when his spirit was overwhelmed that the Lord knew his path. All these experiences of trial and trouble will be repeated among the godly remnant, as all God's people have passed and are still passing through similar soul-exercises.

PSALMS CXLIII–CXLV.

In Psalm cxliii the enemy is mentioned again, the enemy who pursued David. "For the enemy has persecuted my soul; he has smitten my life down to the ground; he has made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have long been dead." How this again reminds us of the death experience of the pious remnant when the Man of sin, the Antichrist will rule in Israel's land. Prayer for deliverance follows. Hear me speedily — Hide not Thy face from me — Cause me to hear Thy lovingkindness — Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies, I flee unto Thee to hide me!

The next Psalm riseth higher. Faith lays hold on God. Israel, as David did, will look in faith to Him who has the power to deliver His trusting ones. "My Goodness, and my Fortress; my high tower and my deliverer; my shield and He in Whom I trust; Who subdueth the peoples under me" (Literal translation). They acknowledge before Him their nothingness, days like shadows passing away. We see how this prayer too brings the final days of the age and the coming deliverance by the intervention from above before us. "Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down; touch the mountains and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them. Shoot out Thine arrows, and destroy them. Send Thine hand from above; rid me and deliver me out of the great waters (the great tribulation) from the hands of the strangers (the Gentiles). Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood" (cxliv: 5–8). Then bursts forth the new Song which anticipates the answer for this great prayer, the answer which the Coming Lord brings to His suffering people, by His manifestation in power and in glory. Verses 12–15 anticipate the days of earthly blessings when the King has returned and rules in righteousness.

Psalm cxlv is a magnificent outburst of Praise. While it is David's Praise, it is also the Praise of Him who is the leader of all the Praises of His people, the Son of

David, our Lord. He is singing praises in the great congregation (Psalm xxii:25) composed of His redeemed people Israel and the nations of the earth. It is an alphabetical Psalm, all letters of the Hebrew alphabet are given except one, the letter "Nun." The Numerical Bible gives the following helpful suggestion: "I cannot but conclude that the gap is meant to remind us that in fact the fullness of praise is not complete without other voices which are not found here; and that those missing voices are those of the Church and the heavenly Saints." In the Book of Revelation we have the record of this full praise. See Chapter v and the fourfold Hallelujah in the beginning of Chapter xix. In this Psalm we find the celebration of the power of God displayed in judgments and in the deliverance of His people. Here we read likewise of His great Lovingkindness in "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy." See Exodus xxxiv:6–7. He has come to dwell in the midst of His people. The kingdom has come and His Saints speak now of the Glory of that Kingdom. They will talk of His Power. "Thy Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." The mercies of the Lord displayed in that coming Kingdom are the subject of the praise in verses 14–21. We learn now why this great Praise-Psalm was preceded by Psalms of distress and prayer. It is in remembrance of the sufferings of His trusting people in the last days, and to magnify the Lord, who alone will save them and that unto the Praise of His Name.

PSALMS CXLVI–CL.

The Hallelujah Chorus.

The five Psalms with which this marvellous Book closeth are all Psalms of Praise. The word "Praise" is found in the Hebrew 37 times. Each one of these Psalms begins and ends with an Hallelujah; there are 10 Hallelujahs.

First is a Hallelujah which celebrates Himself, He who is the God of Jacob. Precious vision of Him who delights to call Himself "the God of Jacob," the God who loves the sinner and has redeemed His people. Who is He? The Creator of all, by whom and for whom all things were made (Verse 6). The Lord of Judgment and redemption; the Lord who looseth the prisoners, openeth the eyes of the Blind, raiseth them that are bowed down — and he will reign for ever. *Hallelujah.*

Psalm cxlvii is the Hallelujah for what He has done for His people Israel. They praise Him now in the beauty of holiness. He hath build Jerusalem; He hath gathered the outcasts of Israel; He hath healed the broken hearted and bound up their wounds. He manifests His glory too by the heavens above. And nature is now in full harmony, restored and blessed. But Jerusalem is the center of Praise and Glory. He hath blessed Zion and her children (Verses 12–14). *Hallelujah.*

The Notes of Praise swell higher and higher. In Psalm cxlviii it is heaven and earth which sing His praises. The heights above, the angels, the heavenly hosts, the sun, the moon, the stars, the heaven of heavens, His eternal dwelling place, praiseth Him. And so does all the earth. The creatures of the deep praise Him, so do the hills and the mountains, the trees of the field. beasts, cattle, birds and creeping things. The kings of the earth, all races of men praise Him, who is worthy of all praise. *Hallelujah.*

Psalm cxlix is the Hallelujah of the New Song. Israel redeemed is leading the Glory-Hallelujah song. The children of Zion are joyful in their King. They sing praises unto Him. They praise Him for victory and blessing. He has executed vengeance upon the ungodly. All His Saints have honour and Glory now. *Hallelujah.*

And the Finale, the last Psalm! It is the Praise to the full. We have seen the "Crescendo" of Praise in these Psalms and now we reach the "Fortissimo," the loudest and the strongest Praise. With this the great Redemption is consummated. Look at this Psalm. It begins

with Hallelujah and after this first Hallelujah we find nothing but praise — Praise Him — Praise Him — Praise Him! Let all that hath breath Praise the Lord. *Hallelujah!*

Reader! Do you praise Him now? Oh let us give Him as our Lord, Him who hath redeemed us by His own Blood, who will soon gather us home to be like Him and forever with Him, let us give Him Praise. Let us sing our Hallelujahs now, songs of praise in the night, while we wait for the break of day, the Morningstar. And the end of all for earth and heaven will be the Hallelujah chorus, a praise which will never die in all eternity. *Hallelujah!*

THE END

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